Ages 11-14: When the Lord Feels Absent

Materials Needed

Sticky notes in three colors; pens or pencils; scissors; paper; copy of *Mount Sinai* and *Golden Calf*; space on wall, table or floor to lay out large chart; a color copy of *When the Lord Feels Absent* for each student

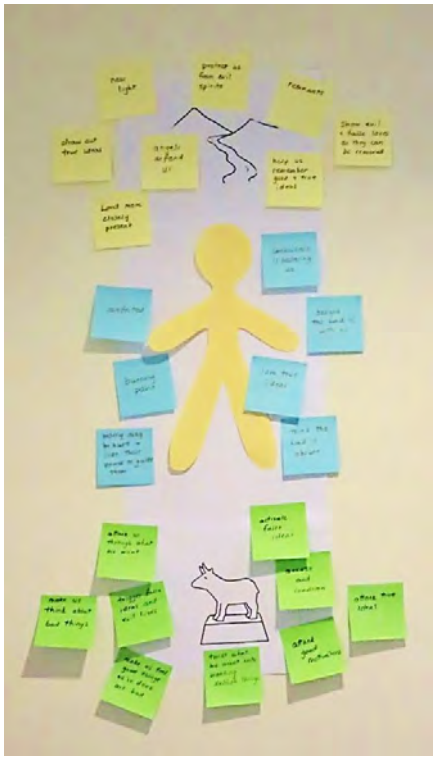
Prepare in Advance

Gather materials. Set up the chart using the picture on the right as a guide. Put the *Golden Calf* at the bottom and *Mount Sinai* at the top. On a piece of paper draw a human figure (or cut one out) to put between them. Decide which color of sticky notes to use for angels, human beings, and evil spirits.

New Church Concept

Teacher Background

As long as temptation lasts, people assume that the Lord is not present, for they are being harassed by evil genii, so harassed in fact that sometimes they have so great a feeling of hopelessness as scarcely to believe in the existence of any God at all. Yet at such times the Lord is more present than people can possibly believe. But once temptation subsides they receive comfort, and for the first time believe that the Lord is present. See *Arcana Coelestia* 840

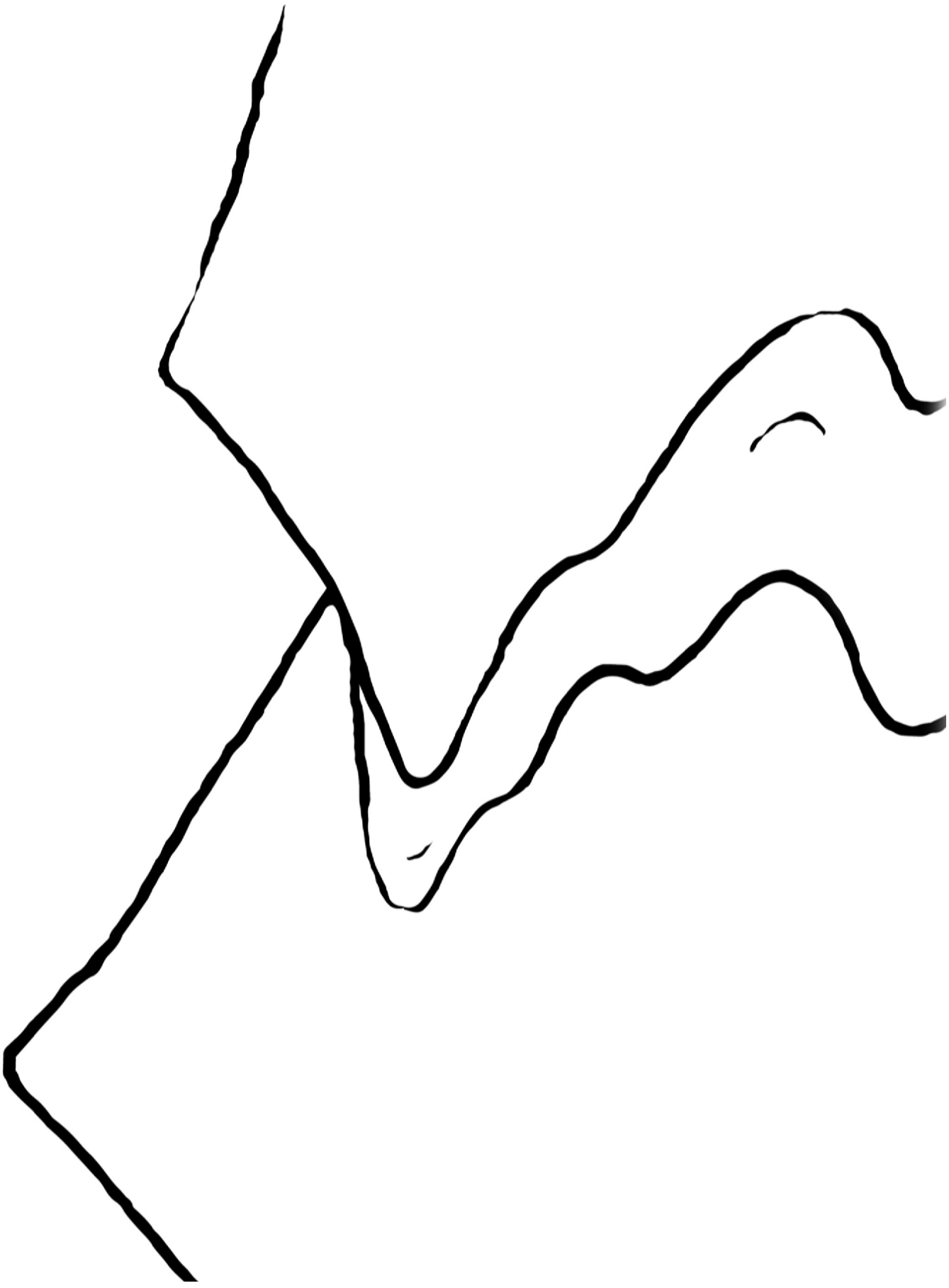


While Moses was up on Mount Sinai the children of Israel did not see him for forty days and nights. "Forty" means "temptation". The children of Israel were tempted to think that the Lord was no longer with them. Like them, we sometimes feel the Lord is absent and experience temptation. This happens so we can grow and experience heavenly life. We experience heavenly life to the degree that we reject selfish and worldly feelings and thoughts. Without temptation, this growth would not take place. This activity helps students understand the inner structure of temptation.

1. Have you been "tempted"? For example, wanted to eat something you knew you shouldn't, to say something that would hurt another person, cheat on a test, etc.
2. What does "temptation" mean? (Knowing what's right and wanting to do it, but struggling because you also feel like doing something wrong.)
3. During such struggles, we may feel that the Lord is not with us, or that our conscience is just pestering us, making us feel unhappy. But the Lord is most closely present with us at these times. He is reminding us what the Word teaches, so we can make good choices.
4. The Writings for the New Church talk about the battle we experience during temptation. While the Lord and His angels steer us towards what is right, evil spirits encourage selfish choices. We are going to make a chart to show the spiritual structure of a temptation, and what we experience as it is happening.
5. Hand out copies of *When the Lord Feels Absent,* sticky notes in three colors, and pens or pencils. Assign each person a quote or work as a group to read through all the quotations, to identify what is happening in a temptation.
   - For each quote, write the words shown in red—what *the Lord and His angels* do—on one color of sticky notes. Stick these notes around the mountain.
   - Write the words shown in blue—what *we* are thinking and feeling—on the another color of sticky note. Stick these notes around the human figure.
   - Write the words shown in bold black—what *evil spirits* want us to think and feel—on a third color of sticky note. Put these around the golden calf.
6. Discuss the process and the ways in which temptation makes us aware of how we need to change to become a heavenly person.

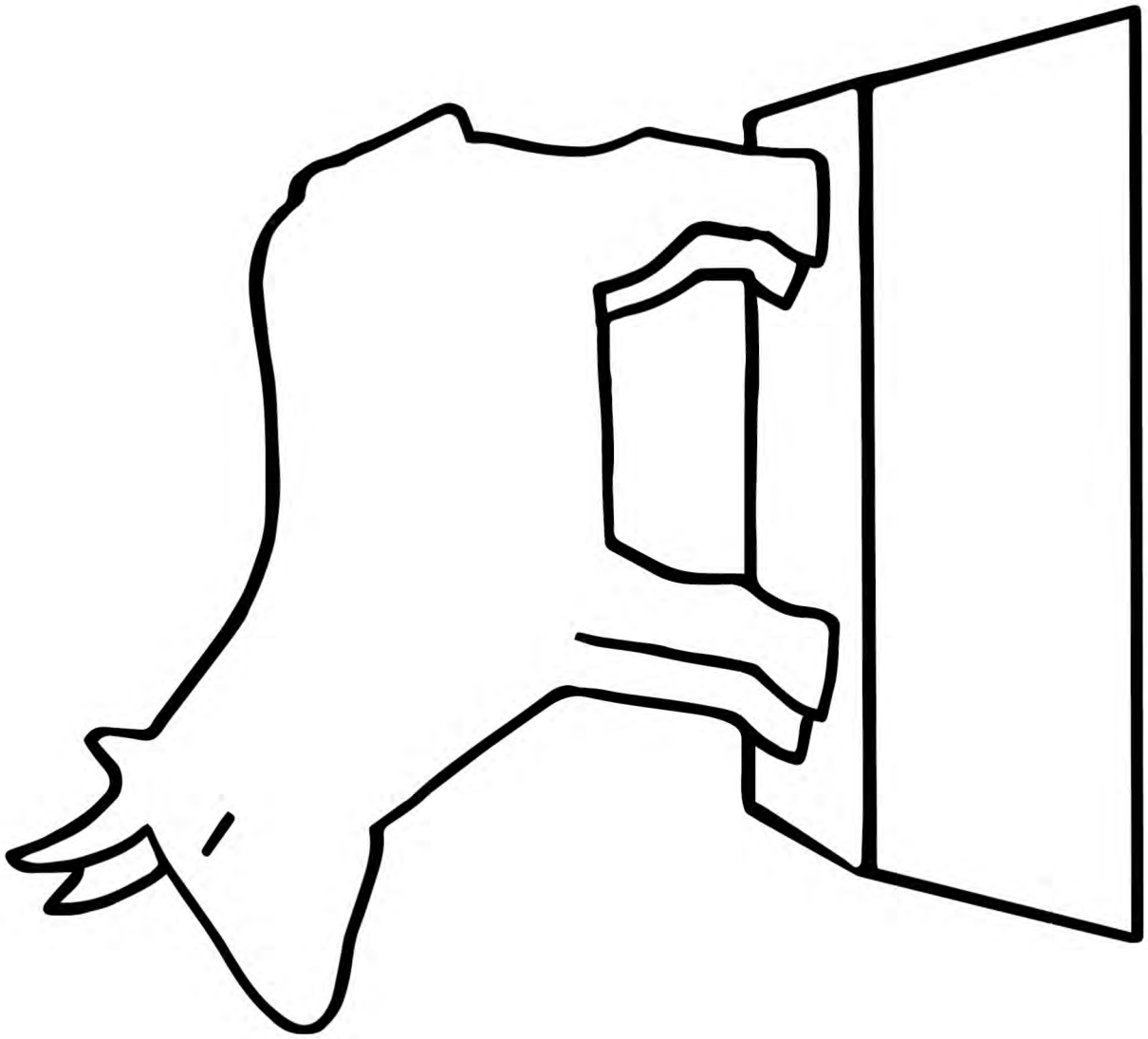
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Mount Sinai



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Golden Calf



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When the Lord Feels Absent

Temptations help show us our **evil loves and false ideas** so they can be **removed**. (*Arcana Coelestia* 5246)

We experience temptations when evil spirits **attack true ideas or good motivations.** When this happens, **angels defend us**. Temptation only happens when someone **loves the true ideas they know**. People who do not love true ideas are not troubled about them. But people who love true ideas **worry that they might be hurt and lose their power to guide them**. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 4274)

There are two types of temptation. The first involves what we think. The second involves what we love. When temptations involve what we think, evil spirits **make us think about bad things** we have done. They use these to **accuse and condemn** us. They also **bring up good things we have done but make us feel they were actually bad**. This kind of temptation is mild. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 751)

When temptation involves things we love, evil spirits **secretly attack us through what we want**. Nobody believes they are doing it. They **twist what we want.** They **turn it into wanting things that are selfish and untrue**. They do this in a way that makes us think it is coming from us. Temptations like this are hard. They feel like **burning pains.** (See *Arcana Coelestia* 751)

During temptation evil spirits **trigger false ideas and evil loves**. They **cleverly bring out memories** of things we have thought and done. But angels who are with us **help us remember good and true ideas**. We feel like our **conscience is pestering us**. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 751)

The Lord gives us **true ideas and good loves** called remnants. When we experience temptations, angels with us **draw out these true ideas** that **protect us from evil spirits** who **activate false ideas**. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 737)

As long we are being tempted, we **think that the Lord is absent**. Evil spirits can make us **doubt that God exists**. Yet **the Lord is** more **closely present** than we can ever believe. When temptation stops, we **are comforted** and then **believe the Lord is with us**. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 840)

When temptation stops, **new light** shines forth. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 5246)

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