



# Does God Tempt?

## Lesson Overview

### 1. Watch a Video

Watch *Joseph's Brothers in Your Head* (4min 28sec), [bitly.com/JosephsBrothersInYourHead](http://bitly.com/JosephsBrothersInYourHead)

### 2. Read

We need to become aware of evil so we can shun it. pp. 1-2.

### 3. Activity: Diagram a Temptation

Read statements about temptation. Write what angels and evil spirits do on Post-it notes. Put on diagram to show what happens during temptation. Discuss, pp. 2-3.

## New Church Concept God Does not Tempt

God does not tempt anyone. In times of temptation He is constantly delivering the person from it, as far as possible, that is, as far as the deliverance does no harm, and He constantly has good in view to which He leads the one who is undergoing temptations. For God never consents to temptations with any other objectives. *Arcana Coelestia* 2768

## FaithBuilder 2 | Lesson 16 | Divine Providence

### Video

Watch *Joseph's Brothers in Your Head* at [bitly.com/JosephsBrothersInYourHead](http://bitly.com/JosephsBrothersInYourHead). (Enter bitly link in web browser bar at the top of your screen. 4min 28sec.)

### Discuss the video

*Choose questions for discussion.*

1. Do you relate to Joseph in this story?
2. In what ways do various “brothers” in your life speak to you?
3. What strategies do you use to choose between voices competing in your head?
4. What are “temptations?” Be specific.
5. Does the word “temptation” relate to the voices in our heads? If so, in what ways?

### Read

The Lord wants to save every human being. He wants to lift each person from a life of slavery to selfishness, and bring them into heavenly joy. But the Lord wants people to freely choose good or evil. Choosing good involves *seeing* selfish behaviors, *acknowledging* them, and *shunning* them as sins against the Lord.

If the Lord did not allow evil things to happen, people could not be led away from evil.

Unless evils were allowed to break out, a person would not see them and therefore would not acknowledge them, and so could not be induced to resist them. Evils cannot be repressed by any act of providence; for if they were they would remain shut in, and like a disease, such as cancer they would spread and consume everything vital in the person. See *Divine Providence* 251

### Lead Us Not into Temptation

This may make it seem as if the Lord wants us to experience temptations. But the truth is that He does not tempt us. He looks constantly at the good that people can be led into by getting rid of their evil actions and longings—which only happens through temptation.

For God never takes part in temptations in any other manner. And though He permits, still it is not according to the idea which a human being has of permission, namely, that by permitting He agrees. A person cannot

understand it in any other manner than that he who permits also wills. But it is really the evil within a person which causes, and leads into temptation. See *Arcana Coelestia* 2768

The Lord views human life from the perspective of eternity.

The Lord foresees and sees all things in both general and particular, and provides and disposes for them. *Arcana Coelestia* 1755

The Lord really wants good things to happen—He *wills* them. He also allows other things that are not quite as good to happen—He *consents* to them. But although He allows bad things to happen He does not will them. He cannot intervene and stop them without taking away human freedom—so He *permits* them.

So although the Lord does not *will* bad things to happen, He allows them so that people can see evil, reject it, and so freely choose heaven.

### Diagram a Temptation Activity

Read the following passages. Complete the activity on p. 3.

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).

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**. (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).

### New Church Concept Will or Permission?

The things which are from the Lord are either nearer to, or more remote from Him; and they are said to be "from His will," "from good pleasure," "from leave," and "from permission." The things which are from will are most nearly from Him... and those which are from permission are most remotely from Him. These are the degrees of the influx and reception of the Divine. But each degree contains innumerable things which are distinct from those which are in any other degree; and these innumerable things are secrets of heaven, a few only of which fall into the human understanding. *Arcana Coelestia* 9940

All order begins in the Lord, and it is in accordance with that order that He rules over every single thing. But there is much variation to His rule; that is to say, it may be His Will, or His Good Pleasure, or His Consent, or His Permission from which He rules. Things that have their origin in His will or in His good pleasure are products of laws of order which have regard to what is good, as also do many things that exist by His consent, and even some that do so by His permission. But when a person separates himself from good he subjects himself to the laws of order which are those of truth separated from good and which condemn. For all truth condemns a person and casts him down into hell; but out of mercy, the Lord rescues him and raises him up into heaven. From this it is clear that it is a person himself who condemns himself. *Arcana Coelestia* 2447

## Diagram a Temptation Activity



Explore spiritual forces at play during temptation. Read passages from the Writings (p. 2) and note what the angels and evil spirits are doing when a person is tempted. Then put together a diagram showing how the evil spirits and angels affect the person's thinking. Set up a human figure as shown on left, with *Angels* above, *Evil Spirits* below, and what the person is experiencing on the human being.

1. The two angels and two evil spirits with us 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 conflicts when we know what is right but want to do what is wrong.
2. The Writings describe what happens happening in our minds when we experience this kind of conflict. Choose a few passages on p. 2 to read aloud.
3. Divide students into three groups. Give each group one color of sticky notes. Groups will copy sets of words onto colored sticky notes. Display as shown.

4. **Group 1:** Copy underlined 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.

## Discuss

1. What tactics do evil spirits use to persuade people of their point of view? (e.g. bring up memories of things done wrong in the past and use them to condemn, bring up false ideas, etc.)
2. In what ways do the angels defend people against these attacks? (e.g. bring up good and true ideas)
3. Why is it hard to detect the hells at work? (act secretly and make people feel as if they are acting from their own free will)
4. Can people experience spiritual temptations if they do not care about the Lord and heaven? (no)