



Spiritual Paths

Lesson Overview

1. Watch a video

Watch *How to be Spiritual* (1min 32sec) at bitly.com/HowToBeSpiritual

2. Discuss

3. Read

Influences flow into our minds from heaven and hell. We are not responsible for thoughts that flow, but for the thoughts we return to, indulge and act on, pp. 1-2.

4. Mistakes and Habits

All of us make mistakes. This activity encourages you to step back and consider the consequences of habits, p. 3.

New Church Concept Freedom

No regeneration is possible in the absence of freedom—through compulsion. It seems as though a person is acting under compulsion when he compels himself to do good, but self-compulsion is one thing, being compelled is another. Self-compulsion is a product of the freedom within him, but being compelled is a product of non-freedom. See *Arcana Coelestia* 4031

FaithBuilder 2 | Lesson 11 | Eternal Life

Watch a video

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Discuss

Choose questions for discussion.

1. What does it mean to be a “spiritual” person?
2. In what ways do you see yourself as “spiritual”?
3. What is a spiritual “path”?
4. Do you see yourself as being on a path? Where do you want the path to lead you?
5. What do kindness, thinking well of others, acting in integrity and being nice have to do with choosing a spiritual practice?

Read

Each person in this world is on a spiritual journey. The Lord lets us freely choose our destination—whether it be in heaven or in hell, and the actions we choose each day lead us along a path that brings us closer to heaven or to hell.

The Lord has provided that in so far as a person allows heaven to guide his thinking and willing, the spiritual man is opened up and developed. A path is opened to heaven reaching to the Lord, and his development conforms with what is heavenly. But in so far as a person allows the world to guide his thinking and willing, to that extent his internal spiritual man is closed.... See *True Christian Religion* 401

Our spiritual companions bring a variety of thoughts to our minds. Some of thoughts are heavenly while others bring influences from hell. We are free to indulge in these thoughts (*e.g.* I want to read or see more of this), or reject them (*e.g.* That is terrible, I’m not going to look at it). Our choice lies in which spiritual influences we invite to be part of our lives. Thoughts that float through our minds do not necessarily reflect what we *want* to think about, but come from the spirits who are with us. By repeatedly inviting a spiritual influence, enjoying it, and acting on it, we become the kind of person who loves it.

Nothing is appropriated to a person that he merely thinks, or even that he thinks to will, unless at the same time he wills to such a degree as to do it when opportunity offers. *Divine Providence* 80



The things which enter into a person's thought, and not through the thought into what we deeply love do not hurt him or her. But the things which enter through the thought into the will do hurt a person because they become that person's, for the will is the person him or herself. See *Arcana Coelestia* 8910

Not what enters into the mouth defiles the man; but what comes forth out of the mouth, this defiles the man. Whatever enters into the mouth goes into the belly, and is cast out into the draught. But the things which come forth out of the mouth come forth out of the heart; and these defile the man. For out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. Matthew 15:11, 17-19

There may be times when thoughts come into our minds, and we find it difficult to shut them out. Praying to the Lord or focusing on His Word can be helpful in these situations. Reading or reciting a favorite passage from the Word can have great power against evil. Learning good thinking habits can save us from many sad and distressing times in our lives.

Read the Following Statements

Circle all answers that are true and discuss.

- 1. A person's path towards heaven or hell is determined by**
 - a. their belief in the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - b. choosing to follow or turn away from the 10 Commandments in their actions.
 - c. the good and evil thoughts that enter their minds.
- 2. People who say they believe in the Lord**
 - a. are already on a path to heaven.
 - b. may be on a path to heaven.
 - c. may not be on a path to heaven.
- 3. People who have bad thoughts enter their minds**
 - a. should be worried, because it means they will go to hell.
 - b. should not be worried. It's just a sign that evil spirits are with them.
 - c. should turn away from them, inviting the angels.
- 4. To become an angel in heaven, a person must**
 - a. consciously choose good thoughts and reject evil thoughts.
 - b. not worry too much about what other people think of them.
 - c. ask for the Lord's help in resisting evil thoughts.
- 5. The Lord guards people's spiritual freedom by**
 - a. not directly intervening in their lives.
 - b. constantly guarding them from hell.
 - c. providing guardian angels and evil spirits so people may choose between their influences.
 - d. allowing them to choose whatever they want to do.

New Church Concept Freedom

Nothing is appropriated to a person except what is done from an affection of his or her love. Only what is from the will can be called free, for whatever a person wills or loves are he does freely. Whatever does not enter into a person's freedom has no permanence. See *Heaven and Hell* 598

The Lord governs people by means of their freedom and restrains them as far as possible from the freedom of thinking and willing what is evil—for unless restrained by the Lord, they would be constantly hurling themselves into the deepest hell. The Lord could by means of angels use almighty force to lead a person to have good ends in view, for even if a person is surrounded by tens of thousands of evil spirits, they can be driven away in an instant, and it takes only one angel to do it. But then the person would go through such torment and hell that he could not possibly stand it, for his life would be wrenched from him. See *Arcana Coelestia* 5854

All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, to such as keep His covenant and His testimonies. Psalm 25:10

Mistakes and Habits

(Adapted from *From the Top of the Yardstick* by Donnette Alfelt. Used by permission.)

We all make mistakes. Your parents and grandparents made mistakes. Your ministers and teachers make mistakes and you have made and will make mistakes. These are inevitable as we are required to make big and small choices hourly. World leaders make world changing choices every day, but in terms of eternity, their choices are no more or no less important than those you must make. In God's eyes we are all equally important. Life is about practicing to do what is right—and it does take a lifetime of practice. The most important part of all of us in what other people cannot see—that is, what goes on in our hearts and minds.

Some mistakes that seem large in your mind may not appear that way to others, and may be too small to even seem significant in the grand scheme of life. But big or small, you can learn from your errors and start each new day knowing it holds new possibilities for change and progress.

A merciful loving God created you free to make choices, knowing you would not always make the correct ones. He is merciful, and at every moment provides opportunities for new choices and growth.

Every time you do something, good or bad, you are practicing to do it again

Beware of establishing habits that interfere with the quality of your future experience. Make an effort to practice good habits which, when established, will make life easier. Consider how life even in the near future may be affected by today's choices. Consider who and where you want to be at the end of your life, and what will help you to get there.

Over time, bad habits become firmly rooted and resistant to change. They may threaten our lives. This includes not only obvious ones, like drinking and smoking, but our habitual ways of behaving and relating to others—things that seem trivial, like using sarcasm, gossiping, lying and criticizing.

Discussion or Reflection

Our minds may deny or rationalize our habits to avoid the painful truth of how they are affecting our lives. Choose a harmful habit, *e.g.* smoking, and make an honest list of possible negative effects and long term consequences. Now make a list of rationalizations for continuing and difficulties of stopping. Where can a person with this problem turn for help? Where there is a problem, what is the most loving thing that others might do for this person?

Follow Up

Make a personal inventory of your own habits. Identify ones that might have bad long term consequences. Make a plan to work on one of them. This could include reading the Word for strength and help, prayer, or finding help from other people.