



THE WORD OF THE LORD

It is through the Word that 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)

In the Word we have many stories about the Lord speaking to people—Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, and many others. They heard the voice of the Lord and obeyed Him. Though we do not hear His voice, the Lord speaks to us when we read or listen to the reading of His Word. If we are receptive—looking to the Lord and His Word for truths to guide our lives—He is able to teach us. He is able to enlighten everyone who loves truth and wants to do it, speaking with everyone “according to his understanding” (*Apocalypse Explained* 1183).

If the Word is the Lord speaking with us, then it is vital that we turn aside and listen to the Word so that the Lord can lead us through His truths. Parents have a special responsibility to encourage children to develop the habit of reading (or listening to) the Lord’s Word. This can be integrated into family life, reading the Word aloud after dinner or as part of the bedtime routine. Gather your family and read a portion of the Lord’s Word. You might want to light candles, say the Lord’s prayer together, and sing a song as well. For more ideas for having a simplified worship service at home, see the **Ideas for Family Worship**. With little children, it may help to preview (tell) the story before reading it aloud and to use Bible illustrations to help them picture the story.

SING: I Pray You, Lord, to Guide My Ways

READ: “What Is the Word?” by the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss

COLORING PAGE: Blessed Are Those Who Hear the Word of God and Keep It

ACTIVITY: Turning to the Lord’s Word

The Lord’s Word can give us inspiration or comfort as we face daily challenges. Here are some suggested readings from the Old and New Testaments for different situations.

COLORING PAGE: The Lord Gives Us the Word

SING: Father in Heaven, Who Gave Us the Word



MOSES AND THE BURNING BUSH

“Thus shall you say to the children of Israel, “I AM has sent me to you”” (Exodus 3:14).

While Moses tended a flock of sheep, the Lord called him to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. As Moses turned aside to look at the burning bush, the Lord called, “Moses, Moses!” He answered, “Here I am” (Exodus 3:4).

READ: “The Burning Bush and Our Curiosity” by the Rev. Walter E. Orthwein

Learn how the burning bush symbolizes the Word. If we turn from our worldly concerns to investigate the Word, we can begin to see that it reveals the Lord’s Divine love. We see the “fire” of the burning bush.

READ: “Approaching the Lord” by the Rev. Brian W. Keith

This sermon explores what we can do in preparation for approaching the Lord Jesus Christ.

PROJECT: Moses and the Burning Bush (for primary age)

This is a sample project from the Jacob’s Ladder program which offers beautifully illustrated lessons and activities. (See the **additional resources** for more information about Jacob’s Ladder.)

RELIGION PROJECT: The Burning Bush (for young children)

This Sunday School project suggests taping red, orange, and yellow tissue paper (or crepe paper) to a branch with leaves to represent the burning bush seen by Moses. You might want to display this project in your home as a reminder for your children of the special way the Lord appeared to Moses.

PROJECT: Use Paint Crayons to Picture the Burning Bush

COLORING PAGE: Moses and the Burning Bush

ACTIVITY: Use a Venn Diagram to Compare the Calls of Moses and Samuel

SPIRITUAL TASK: “The Burning Bush” by the Rev. David Roth (for teens and older)

FAMILY LESSON: The Burning Bush

The family lesson includes a family talk and activity pages for all ages.

THE LORD CALLS TO SAMUEL

Then the Lord came and stood and called as at other times, “Samuel! Samuel!”
And Samuel answered, “Speak, for Your servant hears” (1 Samuel 3:10).

The Lord calling to Samuel pictures the way the Lord calls to all of us in His Word. It took Samuel awhile to realize that it was the Lord calling him rather than Eli. Then he replied, “Speak, for Your servant hears.” We know that the Lord is speaking to us in His Word, but we may need to read a passage in the Word several times before we really “hear” what the Lord is trying to tell us.

FAMILY WORSHIP:

Read aloud 1 Samuel 3:1-10.

You may want to let your children dramatize this story as you read it a second time.

Briefly retell the rest of the story—what the Lord told Samuel and that although Samuel was afraid to tell Eli, he did. And the Lord was with him.

READ: “The Call of Samuel” by the Rev. Jeremy F. Simons

This is a beautifully illustrated talk for young children.

SING: “Samuel, Samuel!” by Lori Odhner

DRAMATIZATION: A Script for a Play about Samuel’s Call (1 Samuel 3)

PROJECT: Make a Diorama of the Call of Samuel

ACTIVITY: “Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears” (1 Samuel 3)

Helps children relate this story about Samuel to other stories in the Word and to their own lives.

COLORING PAGE: Samuel Is Called by the Lord

HEARING AND OBEYING THE WORD OF THE LORD

“[T]o hear His voice” is to obey His commandments (*Arcana Coelestia* 9310:3)

We can “hear” the Lord’s Word when it is read aloud or figuratively, when we read the Word for ourselves and “hear” the Lord speaking to us. Many passages in the Word speak of hearing the Word of the Lord. Here is a sampling of them:

“[I]ncline your ear, and come unto Me; hear that your soul may live” (Isaiah 55:2-3)

“He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” (Matthew 11:15).

“[B]lessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!” (Luke 11:28).

“Everyone that is of the truth hears My voice” (John 18:37).

To really *hear* the Word implies obeying it as well. The Lord wants us to willingly obey Him because this will bring us true happiness.

SING: “Teach Us O God to Hearken to Your Word...”

READ: “If Anyone Has an Ear, Let Him Hear” by the Rev. Philip B. Schnarr

This brief article explains how we hear the Lord calling to us in His Word.

READ: “Hearing the Lord” by the Rev. David Simons

FAMILY WORSHIP: Listen! to the Lord’s Word

What are some ways that we can increase our ability to listen and recall what we have heard?

Echo: With young children, you might choose a short verse for them to “echo” or repeat after you, such as: “He who has ears to hear, let him hear” (Mark 4:9). You may choose to add appropriate gestures (in this case, cupping their hands behind their ears) as they repeat the words.

Immediate Response: With older children and adults, prearrange to respond verbally or in writing after hearing the reading of the Word. Let listeners respond to whatever portion they like.

Split Focus Responses:

- ◆ Ask one listener to focus on the main characters: Who are they? What are they doing? Feeling?
- ◆ Ask another to focus on the setting. Where does this happen? What is the time of day?
- ◆ Another listener might dramatize or illustrate a portion (letting the others identify which part).
- ◆ If you have more listeners, ask one to think of a story in the Word with similar elements.

THE LORD CALLS SWEDENBORG

[T]he spiritual sense of the Word has been disclosed by the Lord through me...
and this sense is the very sanctuary of the Word. The Lord Himself is in this sense....
(*Invitation to the New Church* 44)

READ: “A True Believer and Humble Servant” by the Rev. Willard Heinrichs

Learn about Emanuel Swedenborg who was called by the Lord to reveal the spiritual truths hidden in the Word.

COLORING PAGE: Emanuel Swedenborg

PROJECT: Emanuel Swedenborg (*for primary age*)

This is a special project from the Jacob’s Ladder program. (See the additional resources for more information about the Jacob’s Ladder program or contact us at vineyard@newchurch.edu .)

READ: Emanuel Swedenborg—A Servant of the Lord (*for 12 years and up*)

PROJECT: Swedenborg’s Rules of Life (*color the border*)

ACTIVITY: Write a Bio-Poem about Swedenborg (*for 12 years and up*)

Use the given structure and what you learn about Swedenborg from reading “**A True Believer and Humble Servant**” and “**Emanuel Swedenborg—A Servant of the Lord**” to help you write a poem about this man.

ACTIVITY: “Enter, from now on, into the mysteries...” (*True Christian Religion* 508)

Make a decorative border for this calligraphy about exploring the inner meaning of the Word.