

General Church Education



FAMILY LESSON: JOHN 10
THE GOOD SHEPHERD

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Family Lesson 33 - F

The Good Shepherd
John 10

FAMILY TALK:
SHEPHERDS, HIRELINGS, SHEEP

by Rev. Donald L. Rose

Let's talk about a "good shepherd" — and then let's say a few words about sheep.

The good shepherd is very different from a "hireling". And what is a hireling? Well, you can tell something about him by what he does. When he is supposed to be protecting the sheep and a wolf comes along, he leaves the sheep and runs away (*John 10: 12*).

What does his running away show? It shows that he doesn't care for the sheep. A hireling is someone who does not care. "The hireling flees because he is an hireling, and cares not for the sheep" (verse 13). The hireling flees because he is an hireling, and does not care about the sheep.

To "hire" someone is to pay them money to do something. It is good to be hired to do something, but it is really sad if someone is only a hireling and does not *care*. The Writings give us examples of this. Imagine having the job of taking care of a baby or a child. You probably know something about doing that. But imagine not caring one little bit for the child you take care of, but *only* caring for the money you want. The example the Writings give is of someone who takes care of the child, but when the parents are gone, they have no kindness for the child, and they even laugh when the child cries.

This is said in *True Christian Religion* 441, where other examples are given like this one. "They are like shepherds who care for sheep merely for hire, and if the hire is not given when they wish it, they drive the sheep with their crook from the pasture to the desert." These are people who think of nothing but rewards. If they have done some good things in this world, they feel that when they die they can demand heaven. But when they demand heaven, the question is, did they really *care* in this world? Did they really have love? And if they did not really care, they are sent away angry. "Such are meant in the Word by hirelings" (*True Christian Religion* 441).

We can't miss the lesson here. It is not telling us that rewards are wrong. Rewards and pay are fine. It is telling us that if you really want to live a true life in this world or in the next, be someone who *cares*. If you are given a job cleaning something up, don't just do the quickest job you can, guessing that things you didn't do might not be noticed. Do the job with care. Be like a workman who is fixing someone else's car, but he fixes it every bit as carefully

as he would his own car. When you learn to live life with that kind of care, you learn real living.

Stop and think: what the Lord says here about a shepherd is telling something about the way He feels about us. He is the good shepherd. He doesn't take care of us merely because He has to. He really loves us. He really cares.

Now what about sheep? We are compared to sheep who know the Lord's voice and follow Him. You probably know that a sheep corresponds to innocence.

What is innocence? First, think of it as something that you can see and something you can be touched by. You probably use the word "cute" when you are touched by the way a little child looks or speaks. We are told that innocence can be seen in the eyes and face, speech and movements, particularly of little children (*Heaven and Hell* 276).

Notice the word "affects" in the following description. Innocence "**shines forth from the face of children and from some of their movements and from their fist speech and affects those about them**" (*Heaven and Hell* 277). This means it does something to people. It makes them smile or gives them a warm feeling. Sometimes it can even bring tears to the eyes.

So innocence is something good that you can notice and which does something to you. But it is more than that. It is that something in each of us in which heaven is stored up. (*Heaven and Hell* 276.) Each one of us must have something of this quality, and that is why the Lord said that unless we become as little children, we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.

Innocence, then, is heaven's dwelling place with us, but it is so helpful to have a definition of it that we can work with. It is a "willingness to be led by the Lord." In that short phrase you have the quality of innocence. Cherish that quality of being willing to be led by the Lord.

The Lord was speaking of innocence when He spoke of sheep, and He said, "**My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me**" (verse 27).

Note: An excellent song to use in connection with this chapter is the one by Lori S. Odhner, "I am the Door for the Sheep to come in."

Lori and John Odhner's Songs from the Word are available on tape and in a binder of sheet music from the General Church Book Center, Cairncrest, P.O. Box 743, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009 Telephone (215) 914-4920, e-mail bookctr@newchurch.edu

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LEVEL 1 – BEING LIKE SHEEP

We should be like sheep following the Lord.

Your child can make a little sheep using the picture below.

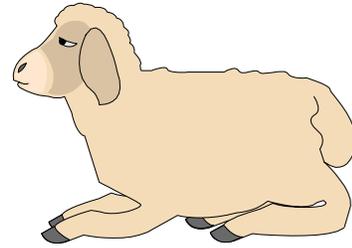
Materials:

Cotton balls

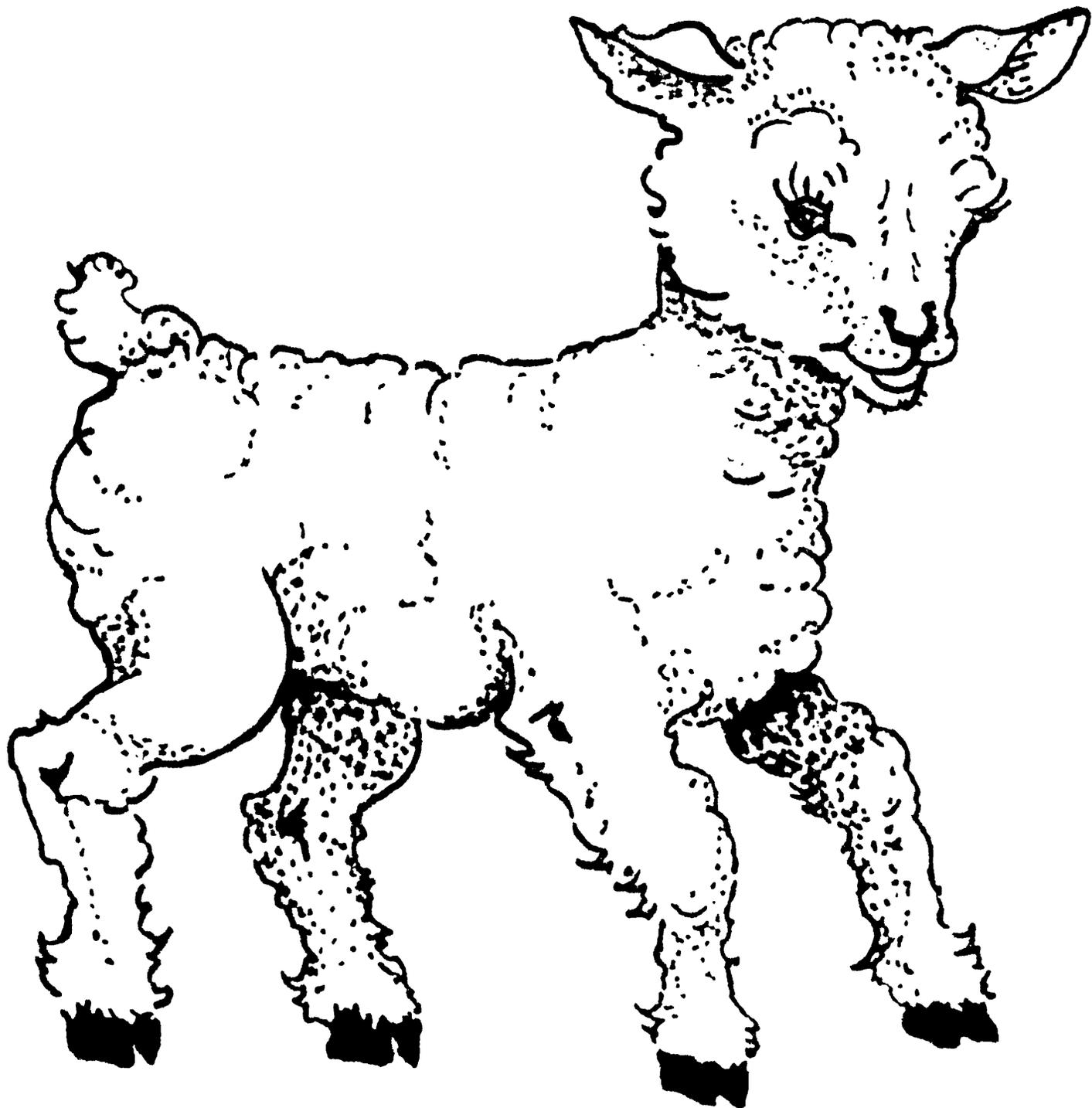
Crayons or markers

Red Ribbon

1. Cut out the sheep.
2. Glue cotton onto both sides of the sheep.
3. Color its hooves, nose and eyes black.
4. Tie a bit of red ribbon around its neck.



Note: If it is at all possible, print or photocopy the lamb picture onto heavy paper or cardstock. This will make it easier to work with and enjoy.



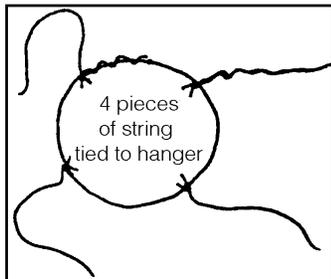
The Good Shepherd

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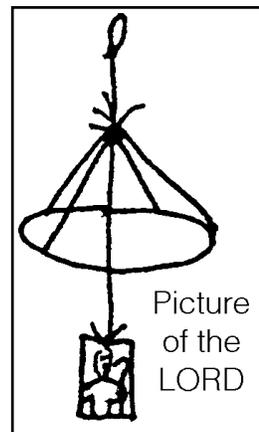
LEVEL 2 – THE LORD AS OUR SHEPHERD

*“To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out”
(John 10:4).*

Instructions for Mobile:

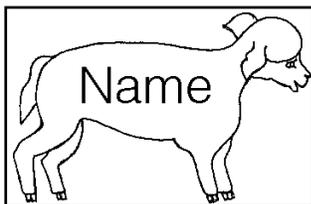


1) Bend a coat hanger into a circle and tie four (4) pieces of string or yarn to it. Tie those four strings together (to create the top section), and attach a length of string from which to hang the mobile.



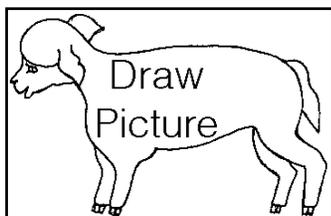
2) Punch a hole in the picture of the LORD (on page 3), and tie one (1) piece of string or yarn to it. Hang the picture of the Lord in the center of the mobile.

3) Hang the mobile from the ceiling



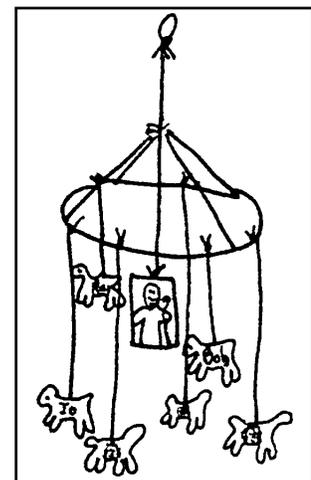
4) Cut out the lambs that are on the next page.

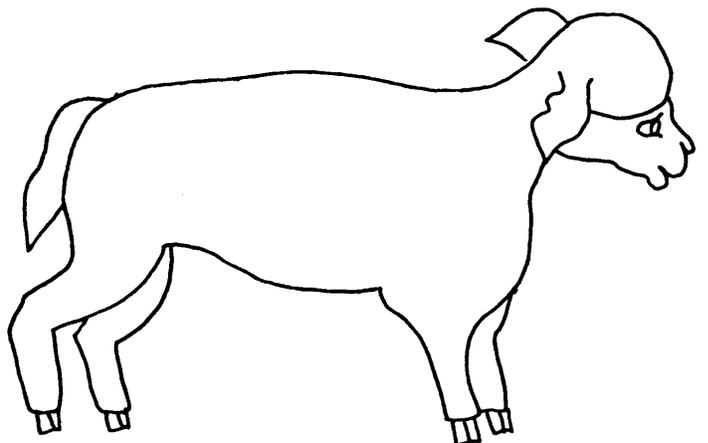
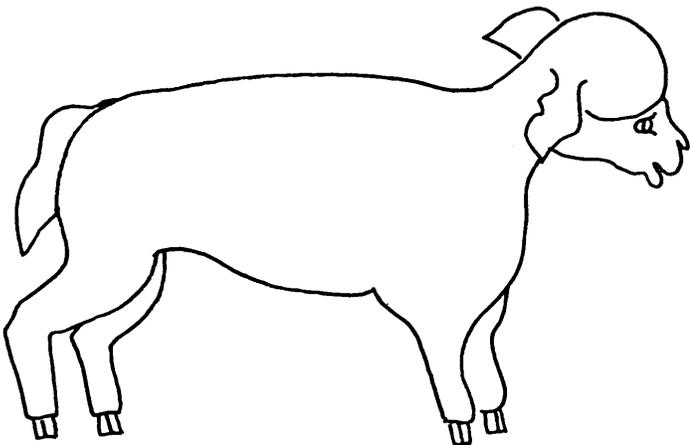
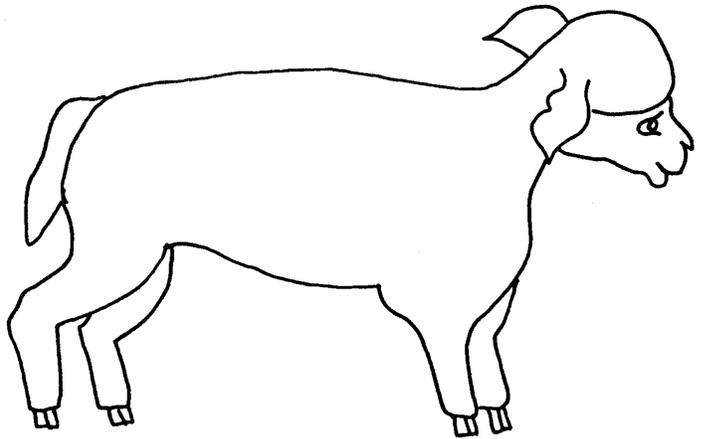
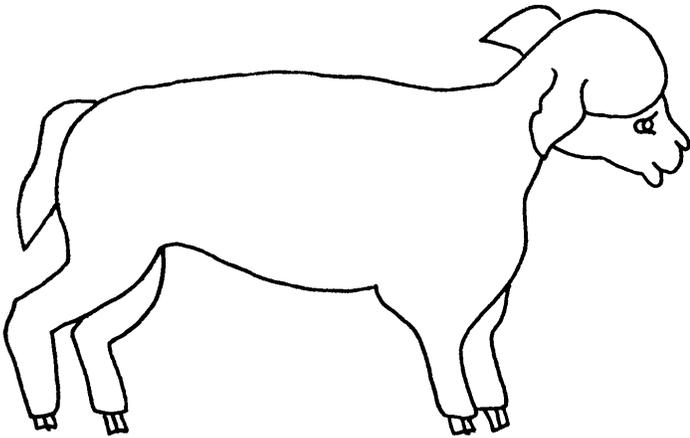
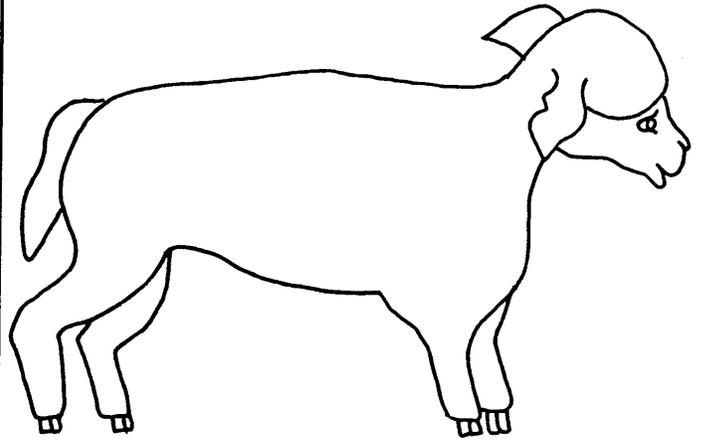
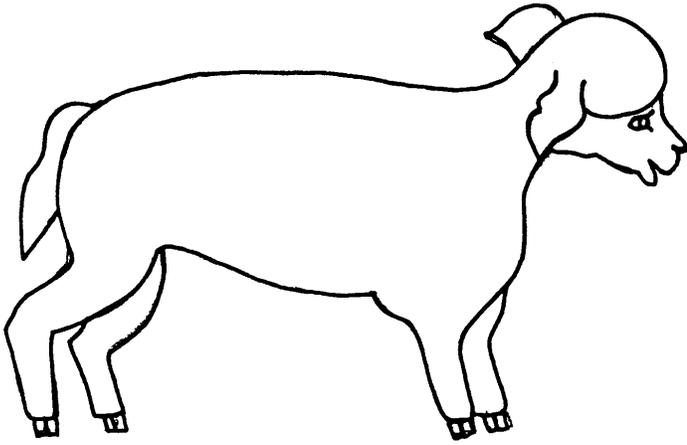
5) Put your name on a lamb - put your mother's, father's, sister's, brother's, and friends' names on the other lambs.



6) On the back side of each lamb, draw a picture of the person whose name is on the front.

7) Punch holes in the lambs, and tie each to a separate piece of string or yarn; hang them on the mobile.





The Lord As Our Shepherd

Picture for Mobile



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LEVEL 3 – THE DOOR TO THE SHEEPFOLD

There are many places in the Word where a shepherd and sheep are talked about. The shepherd, of course, means the Lord, and we are the sheep, if we choose to follow Him.



The Door to the Sheepfold

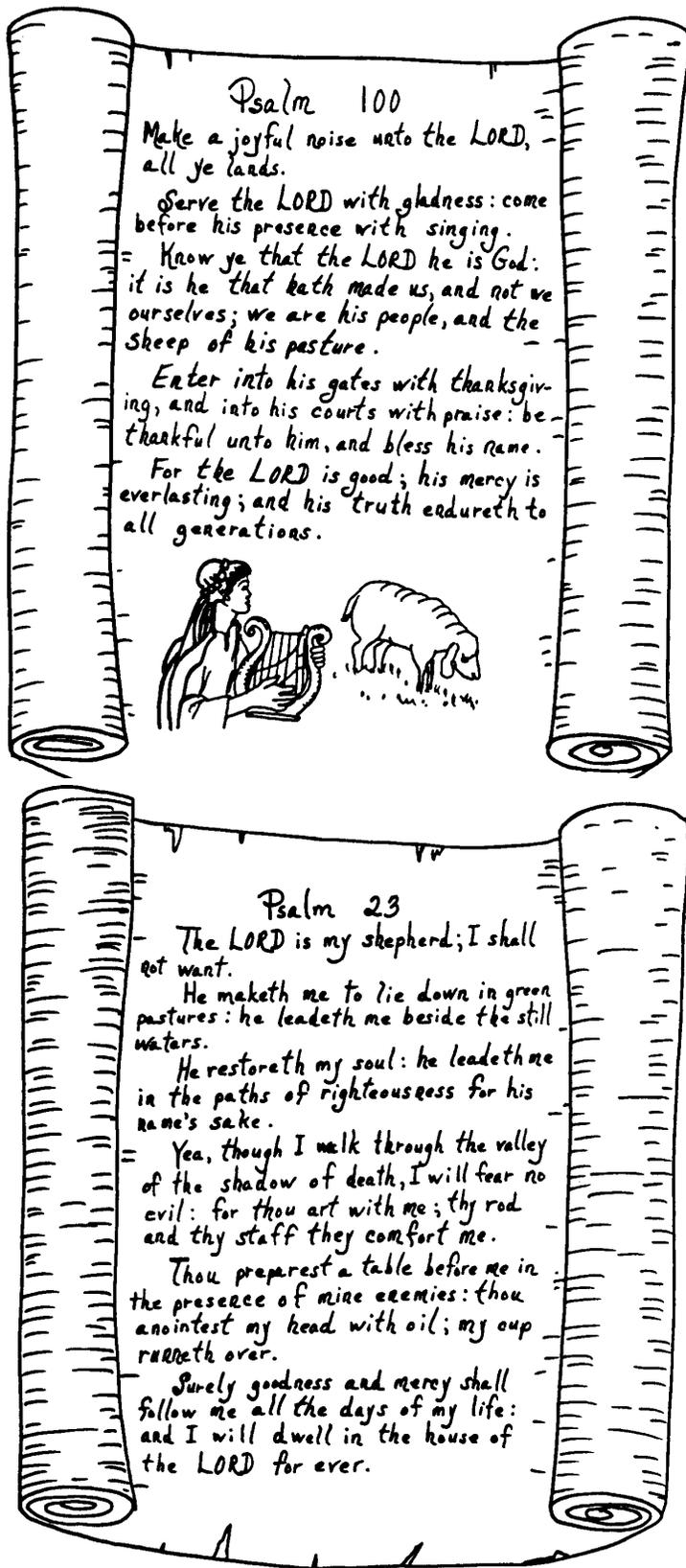
From the story in *John 10* we get a picture of a sheepfold, probably surrounded by a fence. The only way into the sheepfold is a gate or door. The Lord also tells us in this lesson that He is the door.

The Good Shepherd

The shepherd, of course, is the one who opens the door so the sheep can get into the sheepfold. The sheep cannot open the door—they depend on the shepherd to do it for them.

This shows that if we want to go to heaven and live a life of happiness, we must follow the Lord through the way He shows us. This is the *only* door to heaven.

Many people think they know without help how to be good and happy and they want other people to follow *them* and do what *they* say. This is what the Lord means by thieves and robbers who want to steal the sheep. They don't want to lead to the Lord, but away from Him. We know that the only door to heaven is to do what the Lord tells us in His Word.



Here you see two pictures of scrolls with a part of the Lord's Word written on them. They are also about sheep and shepherds.

This is the form in which the original Word was written. In those days they didn't have books in the form we do. They wrote on scrolls which they kept rolled up, and they had to unroll them to read them.

- 1) Try to memorize one of these Psalms (the words are reprinted on page 3), or choose part of the story in John 10 to memorize.

Then you will always have a part of the Word with you. If you can say it, it will be more a part of you than if you just read it. Then, no matter where you are, if you feel you need to know what the Lord says to you, you will be able to remember it and say it to yourself.

- 2) Make a "scroll" on a piece of parchment paper by copying part of the story in John 10 or one of the Psalms on this page onto the parchment paper.
 - use a calligraphy pen if you have one
 - "illuminate" the first letter of each paragraph by making the letter large, coloring it, and decorating around it the way the monks did who wrote the original manuscripts
 - make a beautiful border around your "manuscript"
 - add pictures if you wish
 - add touches of gold with a gold pen or paint

Psalm 100

Make a joyful shout to the LORD, all you lands!

Serve the LORD with gladness: come before His presence with singing.

Know that the LORD, He is God: it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.

Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise: be thankful to Him, and bless His name.

For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting; and His truth endures to all generations.

Psalm 23

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He makes me to lie down in green pastures: He leads me beside the still waters.

He restores my soul: He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies: You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

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LEVEL 4 – THE LORD IS THE DOOR



“I am the door of the sheep.”

What did the Lord mean by this? He meant that the way to heaven is through Him, and there is no other way to enter heaven except by turning to Him.

Heavenly feelings

Heaven isn't just a place you go after you die and leave this world. Any genuine happiness and joy you have on earth is part of heaven. When you get something that you've wanted for a long time, and enjoy it, that can be heaven. Or a wonderful surprise that you never expected can give you a heavenly feeling.

The Lord is the door

Let's look at how the Lord is the door to happiness. Suppose you love music and want to learn to play the piano. What is the “door” to playing the piano? Here are some of the things you need.

Wanting to learn

Practicing every day

Learning to read music

Choosing a piece you especially like

Exercises to strengthen your hands & fingers

Can you see the Lord in any of these things?

Good loves are from the Lord

Your desire to learn is from the Lord, like all good loves. Your ability to figure things out, such as learning what musical notation means, also comes from the Lord. And of course the Lord gives you your hands and fingers.

Our own effort

Naturally, you must decide to practice every day—that's your contribution. Sometimes you won't feel like it and you'll have to compel yourself, but even your ability to do that is the Lord's gift. Choosing a piece you especially like is a way of using the love the Lord has given you to help you learn.

And when you have learned, and playing the piano is second nature to you, you will have the pleasure and delight of playing many different pieces that you love, in any way you want: fast or slow, loud or soft, even in a different key if you like. That is like “going in and out, and finding pasture.”

Thieves and robbers

What about the ones who try to get into the sheepfold another way, the thieves and robbers?

You know there are some people who may not care about the Lord and keeping His commandments, but who want to go to heaven because they think they'll be happy there. Do you know what happens when they are let into heaven? They feel awful! They feel blinded and suffocated, because their state doesn't fit in with the sphere of heaven. And if they could, they would probably try to grab everything for themselves and get the angels to do everything for them.

Do we sometimes act like thieves and robbers?

What does this have to do with your life on earth? Suppose you want to do well in school, but you are too lazy to work and study. You might:

Cheat on a test

Copy someone else's homework

Write a book report without reading the book

If you do these things, you are certainly stealing credit for work you haven't done. Instead of going through the door, you've broken in another way, a dishonest way.

Feeling superior to others on account of any gifts you may have—wealth, talents, good looks, fame, even accomplishments—is another way of “climbing up some other way” because all good comes from the Lord, and if you think you created it and it makes you better than others, you're really stealing it from the Lord.

If you want to do well in school just so you can get good grades and feel superior, you might do one of those dishonest things. But if you want to do well because you want to learn, and to get the most out of your schooling, or to please your parents and teachers from a genuine love and respect for them (a perfectly legitimate motive), doing those deceitful things won't help you get what you want. In any case, they won't make you happy. Feeling superior may feel good for a while, but the good feeling doesn't last. It goes sour.

Appreciating the good in others is really more fun in the long run—it's one way of giving and receiving love.

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LEVEL 5 – WHAT WILL YOUR NAME BE IN THE OTHER WORLD?



In the tenth chapter of John, the Lord says that He *knows* His sheep. He compares Himself to a shepherd who calls his sheep “by name” (verse 3).

Think about your name and the names of the people you know. Will they be the same after death? Have you read any books or stories in which the setting is the spiritual world? Have you read *The Wedding Garment* by Louis Pendleton, or have you read (by the same author) *The Invisible Police*?

The Invisible Police was out of print, but it is available now—a grand story with both the grim scenes of hell and the more positive scenes woven into a lively tale. One of the angels in the story is named Lionel. You will find that when people write stories of this kind (a great idea for a writer), they give the characters in the other world names. Names like Ariel, or biblical names.

Angelic names

Stop and think whether you can remember any names of angels Swedenborg met. The Writings have more than a hundred stories called Memorable Relations, and even more short anecdotes about some encounters in the spiritual world. I don’t remember one angel having a name! (The name “Gabriel” stands for a whole angelic society, or a function in heaven.)

Your name

What about your name? If it is fairly common like John or Rebekah, you can be sure a lot of other people share that name. Check which of the following three possibilities seem most likely to you.

- a) In the other world you will have the same name that you have now.
- b) Another name will be substituted. (For example, your name might be changed from John to Lellwyn.)
- c) Or, something else entirely.

Since every individual is absolutely unique and distinct, do you think

- a) two people could have the same name in heaven? Or
- b) that each name would perfectly fit one person, and one person only?

Remember that although language in the spiritual world is in many respects like language on earth—you can write it as well as speak it—heavenly language is much better. In fact, it is a wonder. You do not find people fumbling for words. They are in the universal language of ideas which flows naturally, and expresses what is in your mind.

The Lord teaches us about names in heaven

Here are four passages from the Writings that will help you as you think about the questions about names in the spiritual world.

1) From *Invitation to the New Church* 41:

“In the spiritual world no one knows another from his name only, but from the idea of his quality. This idea causes the other to be present and be known. Thus, and not otherwise, parents are known by their children; children by their parents, friends, etc . . . A spirit himself is nothing else than his own quality; on this account every one in that world drops his baptismal name, and the name of his family, and is named according to his quality.”

So far, we can say at least that you drop your present name.

2) From *Divine Providence* 230:

“There are no names in the spiritual world like those in the natural world, but each one there has a name that is in accordance with the quality of his love and wisdom; for as soon as any one enters a society or into association with others, he immediately receives a name that is in accord with this character there. This naming is effected by spiritual language which is such that it is capable of naming every thing; for each letter in its alphabet signifies a single thing, and the several letters joined into a single word and making a person’s name involve the entire state of the thing. This is one of the wonders of the spiritual world.”

Have you noticed that people who are very close to each other often have special ways in which they “name” each other?

People call their mother “Mom” or something similar. Children often have “nicknames.” What do wives call their husbands and husbands call their wives? Sometimes it is “dear,” or it may be some other special name.

- 3) This brings us to the saying in *Heaven and Hell* 382b: It is said of partners:
- “that from the angelic idea of the joining of two minds into one, each partner designates the other by a name signifying one’s own, mutually and reciprocally.”
- 4) Arcana Coelestia 6200 gives us an insight into what surrounds our ideas when someone’s name is mentioned. There is instantly present in our mind everything we have known or thought about that person since childhood. This is not something we are conscious of, but Swedenborg was allowed to see it demonstrated.
- “Whenever I have thought about a person I knew, an image of that person...presented itself in the middle. But round about the image of the man – looking like the wings of a bird that are moving up and down – there was everything I had known and thought since childhood regarding that person. Consequently the entire character of that person as it existed in my thought and affection presented itself to spirits in an instant. The like has also happened whenever I have thought about any city...spirits knew in an instant everything I had ever seen in it or known about it.”

The Lord’s name is holy

This is also true of the name of the Lord. If we speak the Lord’s name, Jesus Christ, we have (although unconsciously) all that we know about Him in the inner ideas of our mind. This is why we have the commandment “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain”, and why the Lord’s Prayer begins with the idea that the Lord’s name is to be hallowed or holy.

Application

In the Word, the Lord is called by many names. Each name embodies a different quality of the Lord. For example, when the Lord is spoken of as a Shepherd, we can picture his gentle care and protection for all of us. When He is called a King it reminds us He is the ruler of all things in creation.

On page 4, write as many different names for the Lord as you can remember. Use a copy of the Word to help you find more names. As you write each name, think about what quality in the Lord you think it portrays.

When you have finished, check the list on page 5. Check if it includes any names you missed, and add them to your list to complete the two columns. Then choose your favorite names to copy carefully (calligraphy would be nice) onto a separate page. Add a beautiful border of your own design.

Names for the Lord

And you shall call His name Jesus (Matthew 1:21)

Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6)

Mighty God (Isaiah 9:6)

Wonderful, Counselor (Isaiah 9:6)

Holy One (Mark 1:24)

Lamb of God (John 1:29)

Lord God Almighty (Revelation 15:3)

Lion of the Tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5)

Root of David (Revelation 22:16)

The Way (John 14:6)

Dayspring (Luke 1:78)

I Am (John 8:58)

Son of God (John 1:34)

Messiah (John 1:41)

The Truth (John 14:6)

King of Kings (Revelation 19:16)

Light of the World (John 8:12)

Morning Star (Revelation 22:16)

Sun of Righteousness (Malachi 4:2)

Resurrection and Life (John 11:25)

Horn of Salvation (Luke 1:69)

Governor (Matthew 2:6)

The Alpha and Omega (Revelation 1:8)