
An Overview of Activities for Teen Discussion

Guardian Angels

Background Reading for the Teacher

Angels Watching Over Us Teachings from the Word about Guardian Angels

“When Angels Held You Back” a newspaper article by the Rev. Donald L. Rose

Teen Discussion Activities

Angels in Our Lives

- Ask teens to read **Angels in Our Lives** and the questions below.
- Then discuss possible answers to the questions.

Guardian Angels and Our Thoughts with Us

- Summarize the teachings about guardian angels or ask teens to read paragraphs introducing the T-chart.
- Then brainstorm thoughts that might be from angels and put these on the right side of the T-chart. Brainstorm thoughts that might be from evil spirits and put these on the left side of the T-chart.

Note: The leader may want to make a large T-chart on a white board or flip-chart to list the ideas raised in discussion.

- Discuss the influence of evil spirits and angels. Emphasize that we are not responsible for the thoughts that come into our heads, although the evil spirits would like us to think so! But we are responsible for the thoughts that we invite back into our minds.

Further Discussion

Teens may want to know whether it is OK to try to contact spirits from the other world using Ouija boards, séances, *etc.* The Heavenly Doctrine warns us that there are tremendous dangers associated with spirit communication, because we are more likely to come into contact with evil spirits than with angels. And the evil spirits would try to make us think that they are angels to gain influence over us.

Closing Thoughts

Discuss the use of prayer and reading the Word as ways to draw closer to the Lord and the angels as we make our spiritual journey.

New Church Ideas About Guardian Angels

Angels in Our Lives

Have you been angry and felt the need to take revenge and then somehow, miraculously, you are able to receive a different perspective and change the course of your actions? There is a story in the Word about King David, ruler of all Israel, who had an experience just like this. You can read it in 1 Samuel 25:2-35. David sends his men to beg Nabal, a farmer he had been protecting (like a wall both during the day and at night) for food for his large army. Nabal refuses to help. David is so angry about this that he takes an army of 400 and goes to murder Nabal and his men. Meanwhile Abigail, Nabal's wife, hears what is going on and decides to intervene. She takes lots of food as a gift, and without telling her husband, goes to meet David and his men. When she meets him face to face, she bows to the ground, pleads for forgiveness and offers her gifts. She points out that if he proceeds as planned, the bloodshed may cause him grief later, and people will say that he shed blood without a cause and avenged himself. David's heart melts and he thanks the Lord for sending Abigail and saving him from committing mass murder. After receiving her message, he sends her away in peace.

The Heavenly Doctrine tells us that good and evil spirits are with us all the time, trying to lead our thoughts. These companions provide a mental communication with heaven and hell. By providing links to both heaven and hell our minds are free to choose between good and evil. In fact "Without the communication with heaven and hell a person could not go on living for even a moment" (*Arcana Coelestia* 5849). We would have no freedom, and so no life.

The angels who are with us "... are sent to people to watch over them and to lead them away from evil affections and consequent thoughts, and to inspire them with good affections so far as they will receive them in freedom. By means of these they also direct the deeds or works of people by removing as far as possible evil intentions" (*Heaven and Hell* 391).

In the story about David, we can see the forces of heaven and hell in action. But what *saves* David from making a bad choice is his *willingness* to listen to Abigail. David is willing to acknowledge the truth in what she says, to put it above his feelings of anger and to change his actions.

1. Might David's actions have been different if he had known that angels were trying to influence his choices? Why?
2. Can we be aware of the presence of angels in our lives?
3. How do we experience their presence?
4. Does knowledge of the presence of angels change our actions?
5. At times it seems as if the angels have left us. When David was enraged, as we sometimes are, he seemed to have no angels with him. What happens to the angels with us when we are in ugly moods?
6. Why do we need to have evil spirits with us as well as angels?
7. Are the angels and evil spirits aware that they are with us?
8. Are our spiritual companions always the same, or do they change?
9. Angels and evil spirits once lived on earth and are now in the spiritual world. Will we meet our spiritual companions after we die?

New Church Ideas About Guardian Angels

Guardian Angels and Our Thoughts

Many people know that we have guardian angels with us. Stores sell decorative angel jewelry, decals and window decorations to remind us of their presence. But who are they, and how can we feel their presence?

The Word tells us that “The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them” (Psalm 34:7). Also that “He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. They shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone” In the New Testament Jesus was tempted in the wilderness and afterwards, “behold, angels came and ministered to Him” (Matthew 4:11). We feel great reassurance in knowing that the Lord and His angels are constantly with us, protecting us from harm.

Angels are good people who once lived on the earth, and have now departed into the spiritual world. The Heavenly Doctrine tells us “angels and spirits are present with [people] constantly—angels from heaven and spirits from hell. There are with every person two spirits and two angels” (*Arcana Coelestia* 5849). We have both angels and evil spirits with us so that we have spiritual freedom—the freedom to choose between their influences of good and evil. Without this freedom, we would have no life at all.

“Angels from each society [in heaven] are sent to people to watch over them and to lead them away from evil affections and consequent thoughts, and to inspire them with good affections so far as they will receive them in freedom. By means of these they also direct the deeds or works of people by removing as far as possible evil intentions” (*Heaven and Hell* 391). The angels protect us carefully and unceasingly, bending our thoughts and actions towards heaven all the time.

We need to recognize and identify the source of our thoughts and loves so that we can choose heavenly life in freedom. Below is a chart to help you compare the kinds of thoughts and feelings that evil spirits bring to our minds with the ones that angels bring to our minds. By identifying these, we can recognize these forces in our mental life and consciously reject the evil spirits and choose the guardian angels that are with us.

thoughts probably from angels

thoughts probably from evil spirits

New Church Ideas About Guardian Angels

Angels Watching Over Us Teachings in the Word

For He shall give His angels charge over you,
To keep you in all your ways (Psalm 91:9-13).

“There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Luke 15:4-10).

The Lord leads a person as if by the hand, permitting and withholding as far as he is willing to follow in freedom. If a person looks to the Lord, he is brought by continual steps out of hell up towards heaven and into heaven. This the Lord does without the person knowing it, because if a person knew it he would disturb the continuity of that process by leading himself (*Apocalypse Explained* 1174:2).

The Lord has provided that there should be angels and spirits with each individual, and that a person should be ruled by the Lord through these (*Heaven and Hell* 247).

The two spirits who are linked to a person provide a communication with hell, while the two angels provide a communication with heaven (*Arcana Coelestia* 5849).

The nature of the Lord's love surpasses all human understanding and is unbelievable in the extreme to people who do not know what heavenly love is in which angels abide. To save a soul from hell the angels think nothing of giving their own lives. Indeed, if it were possible they would suffer hell themselves in place of that soul. Consequently, their inmost joy is to transport into heaven someone rising from the dead (see *Arcana Coelestia* 2077:2).

Angels from each society [in heaven] are sent to people to watch over them and to lead them away from evil affections and consequent thoughts, and to inspire them with good affections so far as they will receive them in freedom (*Heaven and Hell* 391).

The angels through whom the Lord leads and also protects a person are near his head. Their function is to impart charity and faith, to notice the direction in which the person's delights turn, and to modify and bend those delights towards what is good, so far as they can do so in the person's freedom. The angels are forbidden to act in any violent manner and thereby crush a person's evil desires and false assumptions; they must act gently (*Arcana Coelestia* 5992).

Every person, so long as he is living in the world, walks midway between heaven and hell and is thereby in equilibrium, and thus in freedom of choice either to look upwards to God or downwards to hell (*True Christian Religion* 69:3).

A love of evil which does not make itself apparent is like an enemy in ambush. Being in freedom to think and to will evil while also learning spiritual truths, helps a person learn how to guard or shut the door against these evils (see *Divine Providence* 281:3).

Nothing gives the angels greater delight and happiness than to remove evils from a person and lead him to heaven. This is their joy (*Arcana Coelestia* 5992:3).

Angels are near to a person just in the degree in which he is in good from truths, and are distant from him just in the degree in which his life is distant from good (*Heaven and Hell* 391).

Just as the delight and bliss of heaven consist in doing what is good to a person and contributing to his eternal salvation, so conversely does the delight of hell consist in doing ill to a person and bringing about his eternal ruin (*Arcana Coelestia* 5864).

It is a momentous truth that the Lord governs people by means of spirits and angels. When evil spirits start to have dominion, angels set to work to ward off evils and falsities, as a consequence of which conflict arises. It is by means of perception, dictate, and conscience that a person comes to feel this conflict (*Arcana Coelestia* 227).

New Church Ideas About Guardian Angels

When Angels Held You Back

By Rev. Donald L. Rose

Probably all of us have done things we regret. Even more certainly, we have said things for which we feel remorse. But consider the times when you *almost* did or said something, but somehow, to your later relief, you were held back and did not carry it through.

We can see this portrayed many times in the Word. For example, in Genesis 20:6, the king of Gerar was amazed when God told him in a dream, "I withheld you from sinning against me." An unforgettable example is when David was prevented from taking revenge by a beautiful woman. I believe that the wise intervention of this woman is an example of what angels do in our own lives. In I Samuel, chapter 25, David had been insulted, and he was determined to get deadly revenge. He was on his way with sword in hand, intending to repay the insult with violence. But then Abigail, "a woman of good understanding and beautiful appearance" (verse 3), came to meet David. Both her beauty and her understanding affected the furious David. He listened to her as she told him that in the future he would grieve over the memory of having shed blood in anger. Charmed and grateful, here is what he said to that lovely emissary: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me! And blessed is your advice and blessed are you, because you have kept me this day from coming to bloodshed..." (verses 32-33). He praised God who, as he said "kept me back from hurting" (verse 34).

Notice that David said to Abigail that God "sent you" to meet me. "Send" is the term from which we get the word *angel*, which means "one who is sent". Now compare this to a striking teaching from the Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church, given through Emanuel Swedenborg. In a chapter about the uses or work of angels, we read,

In general, angels from each society are sent to people to watch over them and to lead them away from evil affections and consequent thoughts, and to inspire them with good affections so far as they will receive them in freedom; and by means of these they also control the deeds or works by removing as far as possible evil intentions (Heaven and Hell 391).

Notice the phrase "so far as they will receive them in freedom." In the story David said to Abigail "See, I have heeded your voice and respected your person" (verse 35). That was a free choice. He could have resisted the heavenly influence and insisted on his own anger. We, also, are quite free. In fact, it is a vital part of religious life that we actually ask God to "deliver us from evil." Try thinking of this story when you say that phrase in the Lord's Prayer. And try thanking God for the instances in your life when you did not do or say something wrong that you had at first intended.

You may find yourself becoming more attuned to angelic influences and grateful, like David who exclaimed, "Blessed be the Lord...who sent you this day to meet me! And blessed is your advice; and blessed are you..." (verses 32-33).