



# How the Word Enlightens

FaithBuilder 4 | Lesson 27 | Word

## Lesson Overview

### 1. Video

Watch *Light in the Mind* (3min 23sec) online at [bitly.com/LightMind](http://bitly.com/LightMind).

### 2. Read

What is enlightenment from the Word, and how does it lift us up? pp. 1-2

### 3. What activities bring spiritual light?

Rank various activities and discuss whether or not they would bring spiritual light. p. 3

## New Church Concept Links to Heaven

Real understanding sees in the light of heaven, and the light of heaven is spiritual truth. *Arcana Coelestia* 8764.2

When a person possessing a heavenly love reads the Word, it links him to heaven and through heaven to the Lord, as a result of which, he receives enlightenment and instruction. *Arcana Coelestia* 9382.3

## Watch a video

Watch *Light in the Mind* (3min 23sec) online at [bitly.com/LightMind](http://bitly.com/LightMind). (Enter bitly link in browser bar at the top of your screen.)

*Choose a question for discussion.*

1. How does Divine truth appear in heaven?
2. How does spiritual light help us?
3. Why is heavenly light different in different communities of angels?

## Read

There is something exhilarating about standing on top of a mountain and looking down over a familiar landscape. Things can look quite different from above. Just as most communities are in valleys, most of our daily routines center on worldly concerns. We lose sight of higher, spiritual, things. The Lord wants to help us view our lives from above—from a higher perspective. We need to climb out of this “valley” and go up the “mountain” that a spiritual perspective can bring.

It is said that a person climbs up, but it must be understood that it is God who lifts us up. We have free will and can use it to gain religious knowledge. When we exercise our intellect and gain religious knowledge from the Word, we smooth a pathway that God can use to come down and lift us up. The concepts that can lift our intellect higher—and let God take us by the hand and lead us—can be compared to the steps on the ladder that Jacob saw. See *True Christian Religion* 24.2

Knowledge from the Word allows us to have communication with heaven. This was pictured in Jacob’s dream when he saw angels going up and down a ladder reaching up to heaven (Genesis 28:12).

The Lord does not lift our minds up towards heaven without our consciously turning toward Him. We must choose whether or not to seek spiritual knowledge and receive it into our lives. If we don’t bother to learn—or choose to reject what we know—our understanding is like a ladder that barely reaches the windows of the first floor of a palace rather than the top floor, where angels live.

The Writings describe two ways of thinking about the Word. A person with an affirmative attitude, believing that the Word is how God speaks to people, has a mind open to believing that the teachings of the Word are true because the Lord

gave the Word. A person like this wants to understand the Word in order to practice the true ideas it teaches.

A person with a negative attitude believes only in what he or she can see with the senses. For example a person might not believe New Church ideas about marriage because he or she has not seen or experienced a truly happy marriage—leading them to believe that happy marriage is not possible. But it is *impossible* to understand spiritual things from a worldly perspective.

The reality of our lives in the natural world can blind us to essential spiritual truths. But if we are affirmative to the truths of the Word, the Lord will help us understand them and give us spiritual light or “enlightenment” when we search for what is true *for the purpose of loving Him and loving our neighbor*.

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you....” Matthew 7:7

The Lord leads those who love truths, and who will them from Himself. People like this are enlightened when they read the Word; for the Lord is in the Word, and speaks with everyone according to his understanding. *Apocalypse Explained* 1183

Truth can do amazing things for us. It gives us spiritual light so that we can see how to walk with the Lord. It gives us something like “spiritual wings” that lift our understanding so we can have a spiritual perspective on life—like an eagle soaring above a valley.

Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles. They shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint. Isaiah 30:31.

To mount up with wings as eagles is ascent into the light of heaven, thus into intelligence. *Apocalypse Explained* 281.3

When we welcome the truth into our lives, it has the power to protect us from being led astray by evil motivations or false ideas. It can free us.

“If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.” John 8:31-32

True freedom involves following the Lord. If we look to the Lord as we make our spiritual journey—believing what is true and doing what is good—He can enlighten and protect us.

### New Church Concept Enlightenment

The Lord instructs everyone by means of the Word, and He instructs a person to the degree that the person receives goodness from the Lord in his will, which in turn depends on the degree to which he abstains from evil thoughts and actions because they are sins. *De Verbo* 13.2

The power of Divine truth is directed especially against falsities and evils, thus against the hells. We fight against falsities and evils by means of truths from the sense of the letter of the Word. *Doctrine of the Sacred Scripture* 49

It is the Lord’s good pleasure to impart strength to a person through faith springing from love in the things that belong to his spirit and that contribute to eternal life. *Arcana Coelestia* 10182.6

It is by means of the truths in a person that the Lord has the power to save him. *Doctrine of the Sacred Scripture* 49

## Seeking Enlightenment

The Lord wants to help everyone see spiritual things more clearly but the quality and extent of an individual’s enlightenment depends on his or her own spiritual development. Our enlightenment is affected by the questions we ask the Lord and the reasons why we are seeking answers. The Heavenly Doctrine tells us how our attitudes and spiritual states influence enlightenment.

The Lord leads those who love and want to obey truths from Himself. These are enlightened when they read the Word; for the Lord is in the Word and speaks with everyone according to his understanding. See *Apocalypse Explained* 1183

We can ask the Lord a question by consulting the Word because the Lord is present in the Word. He is present there because the Word consists of Divine Truth that comes from Him. See *Arcana Coelestia* 10548.2

The Lord instructs everyone by means of the Word, and He instructs a person to the degree that the person receives good loves from the Lord in his will, which in turn depends on the degree to which he abstains from evils because they are sins. *De Verbo* 13.2

### Which Activities Help a Person Receive Spiritual Light?

Put a **check mark** (tick) by activities that you think would help a person receive enlightenment from the Lord. Put an **X** by an activity that seems irrelevant or wrong to you. Put a **?** if you are unsure. Discuss.

	1. Read the Word with the wish to serve the Lord and your neighbor more effectively.
	2. Become a vegetarian.
	3. Join a group of people who want to read and discuss the teachings of the Lord’s Word.
	4. Ask the Lord questions when you pray to Him and want enlightenment.
	5. Climb a mountain.
	6. Do nothing other than read the Word all day.
	7. Turn away from evil thoughts and actions because they are against what the Lord teaches us to do.
	8. Attend church every Sunday.
	9. Don’t bother to read the Word. Just focus on doing good in your life.
	10. Acknowledge that the Lord’s wisdom is infinite and that all wisdom comes from Him.

1. In what ways do these activities help (or not help) a person gain enlightenment?
2. Enlightenment grows as a person continues to make choices that encourage its development. People refer to age sixty as the “age of wisdom.” Is it possible to become wise or enlightened before this?
3. What characteristics of “wise” people do you value? Why are these characteristics valuable?