

## *The Path to Heaven*

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In the midst of many confusing and challenging life issues, many people have asked for a few steps to a spiritual life. Well He has. In *Apocalypse Explained* 803, He lists eight steps that we can go through.

1) *"Let him read the Word every day, one or two chapters, and learn... that God is one, and that the Lord is the God of heaven and earth, that the Word is holy, that there is a heaven and a hell, and that there is a life after death."* If you want to be good, read the Word, one or two chapters a day. This is a first basic step. Not just once a week in church, not just a couple times a week, but give the Lord a whole chapter's worth of time every day. We don't want to overdo this since we know that living a good life is what gets us to heaven, but clearly our reading the Word is important to the Lord.

2) *"Let him learn from the Word, from a master, and from sermons, which deeds are sins, and that they are especially adultery, theft, murder, bearing false witness, and the others mentioned in the Ten Commandments."* It goes on to say we need to learn about the deeper levels of the commandments too: that hatred and revenge are forms of murder, that lust and obscenity are kinds of adultery. We are supposed to do these two steps when we are children! Some of us may have some remedial lessons to take.

3) *"When a person begins to think for himself, which is the case after he has grown up, his first and primary concern must be to refrain from doing evils for the reason that they are sins against the Word, thus against God.... In order to refrain from them and shun and turn away from them, he must pray to the Lord for help."* We are told that shunning evils as sins must be our "first and primary" concern – more important than making a living, more important than anything. Our job is to observe the ways we are not being as kind and thoughtful, and devoted to what the Lord says as we could and strive to change. When we start doing this, praying daily then becomes very important or you will not succeed.

These three steps are the ones we do. If we do them, then the Lord takes us through the rest of the steps. I'll cover these more briefly.

4) To the extent that we shun evils, the Lord will be present. This works only if a person shuns evils as sins against God. No other reason for stopping doing evil will be enough. When we do this, we invite the Lord into our hearts and He starts to work a change.

5) Then we receive the good affections that are opposite to what they have shunned. When we shun adultery, chastity enters; when we shun "frauds and unlawful gains, sincerity and justice enter." This section ends: "From this it follows that to shun evils is to do what is good." This is a powerful statement! Avoid evil and you *will* do good. You don't make a flower grow. You just pull the weeds and the Lord grows it. And it's the same inside us.

6) Then we start to act from God and not from self, "from chastity, from sincerity and justice, from charity, from truth, in humility before God." Over time, we start to act from God's will. We are willing to be servants. Our motivation changes – self interest is not lurking in the background.

7) We gain an affection for knowing truth, for willing good. We start loving truth for its own sake; it ceases to be a struggle to do good things for others. And we gain a zeal, a fire from within, to fight against what is false.

8) The eighth step is really not a step, but a summary statement: *"In this way and in no other a person is reformed."* Shun evils as sins, and the Lord will make miracles happen. "Cease, therefore, from

asking in yourself, 'What are the good works that I must do, or what good must I do to receive eternal life?' Only cease from evils as sins and look to the Lord, and the Lord will teach and lead you." (AE 979:2)

Lessons: Psalm 25:1-10, Matthew 5:21-28, *Apocalypse Explained* 803:3