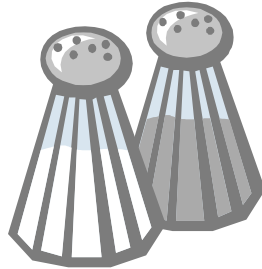


SPICE RACK®

E-Curriculum



by Mark DeVries

Note to the Teachers: The easiest thing to do (which actually becomes the most difficult before the end of the class!) is to use the same teaching method for the entire class period. What most of us are used to is simply lecturing or asking questions. And hey, if your kids are walking out each week saying, "Man, that connected with me. The hour just flew by!," then those two methods are fine. What this curriculum seeks to do is to give you active exercises that take the kids' attention off of you and their own discomfort enough that they CAN naturally answer the questions you want them to get at. Remember the rule: *1 minute of attention for each year of life lived*. That means that even in our older classes, we should be shooting for changing our teaching methods 3 times in the class period. The reason there are seven different exercises is that I'm guessing that 4 of them won't work for your group. If an exercise doesn't work, try the next one. But please try to engage the kids with something besides the standard lecture and Q&A. Thanks for all your work in loving God's kids! Also, to aid you in your preparation, any special supplies recommended for this lesson are outlined in a box. Contact colyer@ymarchitects.com with any questions!

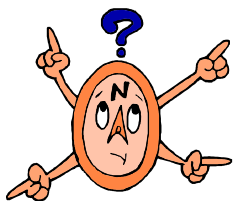
“STRANGER THINGS”

Hebrews 13: 1-3

I. Gathering (Attendance, Announcements, First-Timers)

II. Engaging the Brain

A. Stranger in the Hall

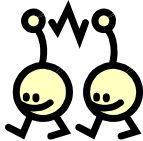


1. Today ask a stranger who is about the age of the youth in your group to stand in the hall of the church looking lost and see how long it takes for someone to come to help him or her.
2. Another option would be for the stranger youth to watch for the teenagers coming to class today and specifically ask them for directions.
3. This person would participate in class normally and then be asked for his or her observations at the end of class.

B. Music to Enter By: Have the song “There’s a Stranger in My House” playing as the group comes in.

C. Strange Pictionary

1. Divide the group into two teams (girls and guys would work fine).
2. Explain how the game will work:
 - a. Each team will be given two words to draw.
 - b. For each word, the team selects a person to draw.
 - c. Here are the rules:
 - 1) No writing words or letters
 - 2) No speaking
 - d. Points are awarded based on how long it took the team to guess the word (1 point=1 second). There is a 1-minute maximum on any word.
 - e. The team with the least amount of points at the end of the game wins.
3. Invite the group to ask questions to clarify the instructions.
4. Play Pictionary Using These Words:



- a. Stranger
- b. Alien
- c. Outsider
- d. Angel



5. Process Questions

- **What do these four words have in common?**
- **Any clue what we’ll be talking about based on these four words?**

D. Video Intro Options

1. Option One: Show the clip from Buffy the Vampire Slayer from the very beginning when Buffy and her friends are going through the mall and they first run into “the stranger” at the elevator.
2. Option Two: Show the clip from The Empire Strikes Back when Luke first meets Yoda in the swamp. In this clip, he is searching for “Master Yoda” and doesn’t realize that the little imp who is bothering him is actually Yoda himself.
3. Process Questions

- **Who is the stranger in this clip?**
- **Does anyone know the rest of the story for this scene?**

- What principles would you draw from this scene?
- How accurate were first impressions in dealing with a stranger?
- Have you ever had a first impression of someone that you found out later was totally wrong?
- What are the most common messages children here about strangers?
- How does that message fit in with God's attitude about strangers?

E. Go Around Check-in Question

1. Starting with the person who has been a part of your group for the longest time, ask everyone to check-in by answering the go-around question.
2. Go-Around Question Options
 - a. What is the strangest experience you have ever had with a stranger?
 - b. Tell about a time when you have been a stranger.
 - c. How do you feel when a stranger calls or knocks on your door?

III. Igniting the Heart

A. The Text: Losing Your Marbles



1. Set up two bowls or baskets in the front of the room.
2. Give a marble to each person in the group.
3. Explain how the process will work.
 - a. You (the teacher) will read the passage for today.
 - b. After reading the text, you will reveal to the group two different types of people, by placing the appropriate card in front of each basket.
 - c. For example, if the two types of people were "short people" and "tall people," you would put a "short people" card in front of one basket and a "tall people" card in front of the other.
 - d. Once the pairs are given, the group members will vote for the type of person whom they believe does the best job at practicing principles you have just read from the Scripture.
 - e. Votes are cast by each person getting up and placing a marble in one bowl or the other.
 - f. After each vote is cast, the group will make some observations about why the votes were cast in the ways they were.
4. Invite the group to ask questions to clarify the instructions.

5. Play “Losing Your Marbles” using these pairs:
 - a. Women/Men
 - b. Old People/Young People
 - c. Wealthy People/Poor People/Middle Class People
 - d. Americans/People From Other Countries
 - e. People who are open about their faith/People who never talk about their faith

6. Process Questions

- On a scale of one to ten, how central to the Christian life do you think the principles of this passage are
- As a general rule, how well do you think our group does at this?
- How many of you have one good friend who is of another race?
- How many of you know the birthday of your good friend who is of another race?
- How many of you have one good friend who is not from our country?
- How many of you have one friend whose family struggles to pay for all their groceries each month?
- Based on our answers here, how are we doing taking care of strangers?

B. Word Search: What does the Bible say about angels?

1. Before class today, make copies of all the entries under the word “angel” in the concordance.
2. Make enough copies so that there is one for every three people or so.
3. Mining the Mind



- a. Explain that you want to collect everything that the group thinks that the Bible MIGHT say about angels.
- b. Explain that you simply want them to throw out things that they have heard or that they might think would be in the Bible about what angels are or what they do or where they come from.
- c. Invite the group to ask questions to clarify the instructions.
- d. Take 2 minutes to write all the “angel” ideas that they can come up with on a flip chart or chalkboard.
- e. Process Questions

- Are there any things on this list that you are sure are in the Bible?
- Are there any things you are sure are not in the Bible?
- How central is a belief in angels to your faith?

→ What facts would you want to check out if you had the chance?

4. Checking Your Facts

- a. Divide the group into teams of three.
- b. Give each team a copy of the angel page(s) from the concordance.
- c. Explain that a concordance is a book that lists every time a word is used.
- d. Explain that you want them to give three awards to ideas that are on the angel brainstorm list:



- 1) The “Bull Hockey” Award—for the idea that is just NOT in the Bible
- 2) The “I Wonder” Award—for the idea that is unclear in the Bible
- 3) The “Right On” Award for the idea that is definitely in the Bible

- e. Invite the group to ask questions to clarify the instructions.
- f. Give the groups three minutes to look through their concordance lists and to look up whatever texts they need to in order to come up with their awards.
- g. Have each group present their awards.

5. Process Questions

- Did any of you find anything that says that when we die, we become angels?
- Where do you think an idea like that comes from?

C. Story: The Rabbi’s Gift

1. Read the following story to the group:

There was once a monastery that had fallen on hard times. Once a great order, ...now all of its branch houses were lost and it became decimated to the extent that there were only five monks left in the decaying mother house: the abbot and four others, all over seventy in age. Clearly it was a dying order.

In the deep woods surrounding the monastery there was a little hut that a rabbi from a nearby town occasionally used. ...It occurred to the abbot...to ask the rabbi if by some possible chance he could offer any advice that might save the monastery.

The rabbi welcomed the abbot to his hut. But when the abbot explained the purpose of the visit, the rabbi could only commiserate with him. “I know how it is,” he exclaimed. “The spirit has gone out of the people. It is the same in my town. Almost no one comes to the synagogue anymore.” So the old abbot and the old rabbit wept together. Then they read parts of the Torah and quietly spoke of deep things. The time came when the abbot had to leave. They embraced each other. “It has been a wonderful thing that we should meet after all these

years,” the abbot said, “but I still have failed in my purpose for coming here. Is there nothing you can tell me, no piece of advice you can give me that would help me save my dying order?”

“No, I am sorry,” the rabbi responded. “I have no advice to give. The only thing I can tell you is that the Messiah is one of you.”

When the abbot returned to the monastery his fellow monks gathered around him to ask, “Well, what did the rabbi say?”

“He couldn’t help,” the abbot answered. “We just wept and read the Torah together. The only thing he did say, just as I was leaving—it was something cryptic—was that the Messiah is one of us. I don’t know what he meant.”

In the days and weeks and months that followed, the old monks pondered this and wondered whether there was any possible significance to the rabbi’s words. The Messiah is one of us? Could he possibly have meant one of us monks here at the monastery? If that’s the case, which one? Do you suppose he meant the abbot? Yes, if he meant anyone, he probably meant Father Abbot. He has been our leader for more than a generation. On the other hand, he might have meant Brother Thomas. Certainly Brother Thomas is a holy man. Everyone knows that Thomas is a man of light. Certainly he could not have meant Brother Elred! Elred gets crotchety at times. But come to think of it, even though he is a thorn in people’s sides, when you look back on it, Elred is virtually always right. Often very right. Maybe the rabbi did mean Brother Elred. But surely not Brother Phillip. Phillip is so passive, a real nobody. But then, almost mysteriously, he has a gift for somehow always being there when you need him. He just magically appears by your side. Maybe Phillip is the Messiah. Of course the rabbi didn’t mean me. He couldn’t possibly have meant me. I’m just an ordinary person. Yet supposing he did? Suppose I am the Messiah? O God, not me. I couldn’t be that much for You, could I?

As they contemplated in this manner, the old monks began to treat each other with extraordinary respect on the off chance that one among them might be the Messiah. And on the off, off chance that each monk himself might be the Messiah, they began to treat themselves with extraordinary respect.

Because the forest in which it was situated was beautiful, it so happened that people still occasionally came to visit the monastery to picnic on its tiny lawn, to wander along some of its paths, even now and then to go into the dilapidated chapel to meditate. As they did so, without even being conscious of it, they sensed this aura of extraordinary respect that now began to surround the five old monks and seemed to radiate out from them and permeate the atmosphere of the place. There was something strangely attractive, even compelling, about it. Hardly knowing why, they began to come back to the monastery more frequently to picnic, to play, to pray. They began to bring their friends to show them this special place. And their friends brought their friends.

Then it happened that some of the younger men how came to visit the monastery started to talk more and more with the old monks. After a while one asked if he could join them. Then another. And another. So within a few years the monastery had once again become a thriving order and, thanks to the rabbi’s gift, a vibrant center of light and spirituality in the realm (Scott Peck, *A Different Drum*, pp. 13-15).

2. Process Questions

- ➔ **How do you see this story tying in with the text we have just looked at from Hebrews?**
- ➔ **According to this story, what relationship is there between the way we treat people closest to us and the way we treat strangers?**

- What do you think about people who are kinder to total strangers than they are to their own families?
- How close are we in this group to treating each other with the kind of extraordinary respect that the monks did?
- Do God's people have a special responsibility for strangers?
- What keeps us from intentional hospitality with strangers?
- What cautions do you think we need to take with strangers?
- Can we be cautious and loving at the same time?

D. Bonus Idea: Desperate to Fit in

1. In the same groups of three, invite those groups to each come up with a story or a list of the kinds of things a "stranger" at their school might do to try to fit in.
2. Invite the groups to ask questions to clarify the instructions before they start working.
3. After giving the groups three minutes to develop their answers, have each group present their lists or their stories.
4. Process Questions
 - How desperate are most people you know to fit in?
 - Do any of you recall a time when you were the stranger and someone "invited you in" to their group?
 - Who in our group seems to do that the best?

IV. Taking It Home

A. Stranger Plant

1. If you had a "stranger in the halls" plant for this class, explain to the group that this "stranger" was a plant, and that you want to ask him or her a few questions to see a little more clearly how this lesson might apply.
2. Questions for the Stranger Plant
 - a. What did it feel like to be a stranger in this group?
 - b. Was there anyone who made you feel particularly welcome?
 - c. What is one thing that someone could have done that could have made you feel more welcome?



B. Stranger Launch

1. Ask if there would be anyone who would be willing to go, as a stranger, to another church or youth group tonight or next Sunday morning.
2. For those who volunteer, divide them into pairs and ask each pair to pick the church they will be visiting.
3. Remind those pairs not to come together or appear to be friends, so they can get the true “stranger” experience.
4. When these “strangers” return in a couple weeks, make sure to make time for their reports.

C. Pray for the group members to be able to embrace and welcome the strange and the stranger in ways that would honor our Lord.