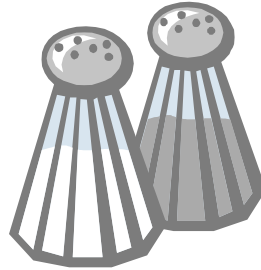


SPICE RACK.®

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!

“THE LAST LITTLE LETTER”

III John

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

II. Engaging the Brain

A. The Knock Knock Fest

1. Divide the class into two teams.
2. Explain that each side will have 30 seconds to come up with a knock knock joke (lousy jokes are fine—as long as they are clean).
3. Explain that the last team to come up with a knock knock joke without repeating one is the winner.
4. Invite the group to ask questions to clarify the instructions.
5. Have the “Knock Knock Fest” (the one the group has been waiting for all year).



6. Process Questions

- How do you usually feel when someone knocks on your door at home?
- If someone came to your house and asked to stay for the night, what would you (or your parents) say?
- What if he was a preacher that you had never met?
- There is a book of the Bible that deals with this kind of hospitality. Any ideas what the book is?

B. Check-in Go-Around: Strangers

1. Move the group into a circle.
2. Starting with the person who has been in the group the longest, ask each person to tell about a time when he or she felt like a stranger, a time he or she might have felt unwelcome or excluded.
3. After everyone has had the chance to check in, ask the following process questions:
 - If you were to put “hospitality to strangers” on a scale of importance from one to ten (one being relatively unimportant and ten being essential), what number would you give it?
 - What number do you think Jesus might give it?
 - How good do you think most youth groups are at welcoming strangers?
 - How good is ours?
 - Any more guesses what that little-known book in the Bible particularly urges its readers to practice hospitality toward fellow Christians? (Hint: It is very a short book because its length was limited by the size of a single sheet of papyrus.)

C. How Small Can You Make Your Letters?

1. Give everyone a scratch piece of paper and a pencil.
2. Explain that their job is to write out on the sheet of paper the name of the book of the Bible that they think we will be dealing with today...with one catch. They need to write the name of that book as small as they possibly can.
3. Explain to the group that they can write the name of the book three times and then circle their smallest, most legible one.
4. Have the group members exchange sheets with each other.
5. Process Questions
 - Any nominations for the smallest, most legible answer?
 - What does that answer say?
 - Based on what we have been talking about over the past few weeks, what book would you guess we might be looking at today?

D. On-Site Options: How Does It Feel to Be a Stranger?

1. This one might take a little planning (or you could do it next week).
2. Divide the group into teams of two who will each go to a different youth Sunday School class at a different church.
3. Give the teams these instructions.
 - a. If you go with a partner, go in at different times, and don't let on to the group that you and your partner know each other.
 - b. Watch for anything that folks in the group do to help you feel welcomed as a stranger.
 - c. Watch for anything that folks in the group do that make you feel excluded as a stranger.
4. When the groups get back, ask these process questions:



- How did it feel to be a stranger?
- What did you experience that helped you feel welcomed?
- What did you experience that made you feel excluded?
- What did you learn that might change the way you relate to strangers in our group?
- Did anyone in the churches that you went to act like you would expect Jesus to act?
- Who in our group would you expect to treat a stranger that way?

III. Igniting the Heart

A. The Text—III John

1. Intro Questions
 - Does anyone remember anything about II John?
 - From the exercises we have just done, can anyone make a stab about what the little book of III John is all about?
2. Mini-Lecture: We could call 2nd and 3rd John “God’s Little Letters About Welcoming Friends.” Because there were no Holiday Inn’s back in biblical times, Christians would often stay with Christians on their journeys. But some false teachers had arisen who would take advantage of the hospitality of Christians and stay for a long time, “mooching” off of the kindness of their hosts. II John warns the “lady” to whom it is addressed, not even to take these false teachers into her home. III John has a different message.
3. A Little Detective Work
 - a. Bring a few trench coats, fedoras and other sleuthing props to class.
 - b. Divide the class into teams and give one prop to each team. Teams of three to six would be ideal.
 - c. Give one of the members of each team one of the detective props.



- d. If you're really feeling creative, you could play a little Mission Impossible music while the teams are being divided up.
- e. Explain to the group that they will each be a part of a different detective agency. Their job is to come up with a theory of exactly what IS going on in Gaius' church, without using any other clues than John's third letter.
- f. Invite the group to ask questions to clarify the instructions.
- g. Distribute Bibles and copies of III John, enough for at least every other person in the group to have one.
- h. Give the groups 4 minutes to come up with their theories. The person with the prop should assign someone in the group to take notes and someone else to give the report to the rest of the group.
- i. Have each group report on its theory.
- j. Process Questions

→ **What things can we be certain of in this letter—what is clear?**

→ **What things are not so clear?**

→ **Which of the theories that we've just heard seem the most reasonable?**

→ **How did John feel about what Gaius had done?**

→ **If you were Diotrephes and had these things written about you, how would you feel?**

→ **If someone said those things about you today and they were true, do you think you would pay attention to the criticism and decide to change or would you resist it?**

B. Latin Letters



1. Distribute sheets of paper and pencils to the class.
2. Ask the class members to write their own letter to "Marcus" (or a Latinized name of one of your youth leaders, like Gregorius or Stanus Maximus, etc.) about what has been going on at your church, especially noting God's people feel welcomed there (like Gaius did) or whether they experience a lack of hospitality (like Diotrephes might have given).
3. If the letter-writing thing seems to be going well, ask the group members to write a second fictitious letter from "Vizitus" back to John, a letter that reports on what kind of reception he received at your youth group (for example, First Presbyterius Youth Groupimus).
4. 2x2 Processing: Have the group members pair up and share the letters they had written.
5. Process Questions

→ **How well do you think our group does showing the kind of hospitality that III John talks about?**

→ **John suggests that Diotrephes has one root problem. Do you remember what it was? (He "loves to be first.")**

- How much do you think we have problems welcoming outsiders into the group? How much of that problem stems from people who want “to be first”?
- In general, do you think John would see this class as more like Diotrephes or more like Gaius?
- The Bible includes the book that really has nothing more important to say than to remind us of how the Christian community is supposed to act. If you were God, would you have included this kind of thing in the Bible or would you have saved the space for something more important?
- What would you say to the teenager who might say, “This class today has NOTHING to do with our lives!”?
- Would you agree with this statement: “Everything else that matters in the Christian life is dependent on the kind of Christian community we experience”?

C. Naming Your Gaius?

1. Mini-Lecture: *Most of you are here today because somebody welcomed you (at least those of you who have cars and have the choice). Even though you were a stranger at one time, someone helped you feel comfortable and made you feel like you had a place here. And even if you don't quite feel comfortable yet, chances are at least one person here has tried to reach out to you in some way to help you feel like you belong.*
2. Go Around
 - a. Starting with the person in the group who has been in the church the longest, have everyone answer the “go around” question.
 - b. The Question: Who in the church has been like “Gaius” to you?
3. Process Questions
 - Which is easier for you—to be the one being welcomed or to be the welcomer?
 - What do you think God would say to those who are too busy to practice “hospitality”?
 - Who in this room do you think is the best at being “Gaius”?

IV. Taking It Home

A. And Whom Would You Invite?



1. Distribute pencils and scratch paper.
2. Ask each person to write on his or her paper the names of people they know who would love to be a part of your group at church if they knew they would feel like they belonged.

3. Give this alternative question: "Who would you bring with you to church if you knew they would not be embarrassed or left out?"
4. Collect those names.

B. Prayer Pile

1. Collect the papers in a pile in the center of the room.
2. Ask the group to imagine how God might want them to pray for the people whose names are in that pile.
3. Pray that your group would continue to become the kind of place where outsiders would feel such love and welcome that they would want to live for Christ more eagerly.