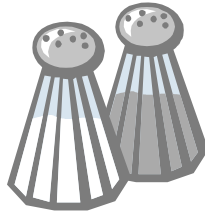


SPICE RACK®

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!

“INTRO TO PSALMS & PROVERBS”

Psalm 40

I. Gathering (Attendance, First-Timer Cards, Announcements)

II. Engaging the Brain

A. Starting Right Check-In

1. Explain to the group that the “powers that be” are looking for input from this group as the class starts up again this year.
2. Starting with the person who has been in the church the longest, ask each person in the group to check in for the morning by saying one thing they want to make sure stays the same about the group and one thing they would like to see change.
3. Before starting this check-in process, invite the group to ask questions to clarify the instructions.
4. As the group members give their answers, take notes and try to use some of their input each week in setting up the classes for the semester.
5. Process Questions



- *Design sustainable, deep impact youth ministries, one church at a time.*
- *Build the competence, joy and longevity of professional youth workers,*
- *Construct bridges to the best youth ministry resources available today.*

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- ➔ Of all the things you heard, what does it seem like the biggest concern is?
- ➔ Is there anything else that you'd like the "powers that be" to know about our group?

B. This T-Shirt Could Be Yours



1. Bring to class today two items you can give away as prizes (a couple extra t-shirts from previous youth events come to mind).
2. Explain that you will not give the group time to strategize for this competition. You will simply give a single challenge, and the first person to complete the task wins the prize.
3. Confirm that everyone understands how the competition will work.
4. Give the challenge: The first person to find the book of Proverbs in the Bible wins (even if no one has brought a Bible, have them scavenge around the room to find one).
5. Throw the t-shirt (or other prize) to the winner.
6. Repeat the same process for the book of Psalms.
7. Basic Stuff Mini-Lecture
 - a. This year, we'll be spending a lot of time in the Psalms and Proverbs.
 - b. There are a few basic facts about these books that this group needs to get down, but first we've got a little exercise to help you get a feel of the kinds of things you might find in these books.

C. "Bop the Buzzer" (The Alternative for Kids Who Can't Sit Still)

1. Divide the class into guys and girls groups (or if your group needs to do a little more cross-gender mixing, put together two teams, each having half girls and half guys).
2. Selecting the (Game Show) Buzzers
 - a. Ask for a volunteer on each team who would be willing to be "the buzzer."
 - b. If there is more than one volunteer on each team, have try-outs for the person who makes the best buzzing sound.
 - c. Place the two buzzer people face to face in chairs in the middle of the room.
3. Set Up
 - a. With the "buzzers" facing each other, have each team stand at least five feet behind its buzzer.
 - b. Behind each team, place a pile of newspapers (make sure the newspapers are an equal distance behind each team).
 - c. Have each group select a runner, a thrower, and an answerer.
4. Explain how the game works.





- a. You (the teacher) will read a verse that comes from either the book of Psalms or the book of Proverbs.
 - b. The group will huddle together and decide which book the verse is from.
 - c. As soon as the group comes up with its answer, they send their runner to the newspapers.
 - d. The runner grabs a SINGLE sheet of newsprint (if he or she gets more, he or she gets sent back to the pile). While running back, the runner crumbles the paper into a ball.
 - e. The runner hands the paper to the thrower. The thrower tosses the paper wad at the buzzer. The buzzer cannot get out of the chair.
 - f. If the buzzer is hit by the paper, he or she buzzes. If not, the thrower runs back to get another sheet of paper.
 - g. The team whose buzzer sounds first gets the chance to answer first. For each right answer, a team is awarded 5,234 points.
 - h. The first team to reach 25,000 points wins.
5. Invite the group to ask questions to clarify the instructions.
Play the game, using these verses
- Proverbs 1:1
 - Psalm 23:1
 - Psalm 22:1
 - Proverbs 22:1
 - Proverbs 3:5
 - Proverbs 1:6
 - Psalm 150:1
 - Proverbs 22:24
 - Psalm 25:1
 - Proverbs 15:12
 - Proverbs 17:10
- (and any other random verses from these books, as necessary)

6. Process Questions

- ➔ **How were you able to tell the writings in Proverbs apart from the writings in Psalms?**
- ➔ **What sticks in your mind from the verses we read during this game?**

D. Basic Stuff Review Questions

1. Explain that there are few things about Psalms and Proverbs that the group needs to have filed away.
2. Ask the following intro questions.
 - a. *What is a "psalm"? (a song)*
 - b. *What is a "proverb"? (a wise saying)*
 - c. *One of these books teaches believers how to worship. (Psalms)*



- d. *One of these books teaches believers how to live...or how to become wise. (Proverbs)*
- e. *There are 31 Proverbs. (making it a nice book to read in a month, a chapter a day)*
- f. *There are 150 Psalms. (making it a nice book to read in a month, at 5 chapters a day)*
- g. *According to tradition, who wrote most of the Psalms? (David)*
- h. *According to tradition, who wrote most of the book of Proverbs? (Solomon)*

3. Review the basic facts again, making sure that everyone has them down (and feels smart).

III. Igniting the Heart

A. Text: Psalm 40



1. Play the recording of the song “40” (Psalm 40) from the rock band, U-2.
2. Process Questions
 - ➔ **What is the song saying?**
 - ➔ **When the average Joe hears this song on a U-2 album, what do you think he or she might assume it is about?**
 - ➔ **The name of the song is “40.” Does anyone know where that title came from?**
 - ➔ **Why would a group like U-2 include a song like this one on one of its albums?**
3. Distribute journal sheets and pencils to everyone.
4. Give the following instructions:
 - a. Circle WHO you think this song is about (circle every time that person is mentioned).
 - b. Underline what you think is the most important line in the song.
 - c. Draw a question mark next to anything you are not clear about.
5. Invite the group to ask questions to clarify the instructions.
6. Give the group a few minutes to make their markings on their journal sheets.
7. Process Questions
 - ➔ **Who do you think is the most important person in this song?**
 - ➔ **Can you remember a time in your life when you were slipping, like you were in a “slimy pit,” either literally or figuratively, and couldn’t seem to get out? (You [the teacher] may want to tell a story from your own life in response to this question)**
 - ➔ **What do you think the songwriter means when he talks about a “new song”?**



- ➔ Which would you rather listen to—an old song or a new song?
- ➔ Who do you think tends to be more comfortable with new songs—older people or younger people?
- ➔ Whom do you think is more willing to listen to the songs from the other generation—older people or younger people?

B. Faith Tracking--Paying Attention to God (This should be a non-optional part of the lesson, since you'll be building on it all semester)



1. Explain to the group that the focus for this first semester (Psalms) is built on the assumption that God is at work in their lives. And based on that assumption, the group will take time each week to try to discern the presence and work of God in their lives.
2. Introduce the Faith Tracking system
 - a. Each week, the group will be given time to look back (sometimes way back, like in the autobiography question last week) and try to see where God has been at work.
 - b. Some weeks, the group will work on their spiritual autobiographies with a specific question, at other times, the group will just be given a more general question about the past week to write or think about.
 - c. The idea this year is to move from second-hand faith (where you read and hear stories about other people's experiences of God) to a first-hand faith (in which you write your own stories of the places where you think you may have seen God work in your life.
3. Ask the group to think back over their past week and recall how or where they experienced something related to God.
4. Explain that it would be normal that on some weeks, someone might write, "This week I didn't feel God's presence at all. I felt like I was a million miles away." or "This week, I just didn't care." or "This week I had trouble paying attention to God in Sunday School. I came with the desire to really listen for God's voice, but I didn't hear anything."
5. Explain that you will be keeping up with these "tracking records" so that each person in the class will have a sense of where their faith has been over this semester.
6. Invite the group to ask questions to clarify what they will be doing.
7. Give the group 2 minutes to write on their journal sheets their answer to the faith tracking questions [If they are saying, "We don't have enough time!," you are doing the right thing. We are trying to create a sense of excitement about this exercise (i.e., "We need to do this more!") rather than a sense of drudgery (i.e., "This again?!").
8. Faith Tracking Questions



- a. At what times or places did you have thoughts of God this past week?
 - b. When did you come the closest to experiencing God's presence and why?
 - c. When did you feel the farthest from God? Why do you think God felt so far away at that time?
9. Have everyone write the grade, their name and the date on the sheet and turn it in to you. Collect these sheets to be given back to the students at the end of the year.
 10. Process Questions

- ➔ **Was this a difficult or an easy process for you?**
- ➔ **Which of the three questions was the hardest?**
- ➔ **Does anyone want to tell about something they wrote or something about how the process worked for you?**

C. 4x4: What Could We Find?



1. Move the class into groups of four each.
2. Explain that the groups have 3 minutes to complete the following statement: "If taking a look at the Psalms in this class were a home run, by the end of the semester we would..."
3. Have the groups report their answers.
4. Process Questions

- ➔ **How much do people at your school care about spiritual things? Would most of them like to feel more spiritually grounded, or would you say that most of them don't really give a rip?**
- ➔ **What kind of benefits could there be if this semester you really experienced God in a whole new way?**

D. Song Search (Optional Assignment)

1. Invite the group to listen for songs this semester that could be seen as calling out to God or crying out to God for help (they need not be particularly spiritual songs).
2. Explain that, whenever they want, the group can take time each week to listen to a modern-day psalm (one that might be on the radio) and try to see the longing for God beneath the words that may never mention God.

IV. Taking It Home

A. First Semester Challenge

1. Quick Review Question: How many Psalms are there?



2. Challenge the group members to read one psalm a day between now and Ash Wednesday, marking the psalms up like we did today with Psalm 40. At a chapter a day, the group should easily finish all 150 by then.

B. Using a Psalm to Close in Prayer

1. Teach the class Ps. 103:1--Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name.
2. Have the group bow their heads and speak this prayer together slowly as a closing today.

↓ JOURNAL SHEET BELOW ↓



JOURNAL SHEET
Psalm 40
“Intro to Psalms and Proverbs”

A New Song

He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and the mire;
he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.

He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord.

Blessed is the man who makes the Lord his trust,
who does not look to the proud to those who turn aside to false gods.

Ps. 40:2-4

Circle **WHO** you think this song is about (circle every time that person is mentioned).

Underline what you think is the most important line in the song.

Draw a question mark next to anything you are not clear ?? about.

Faith Tracking Questions

1. At what times or places did you have thoughts of God this past week?

2. When did you come the closest to experiencing God's presence and why?

3. When did you feel the farthest from God? Why do you think God felt so far away at that time?

