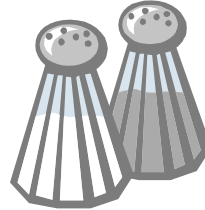


# SPICE RACK®

## 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](mailto:colyer@ymarchitects.com) with any questions!

## “WHEN GOD HIDES HIS PRESENCE”

### Psalm 13

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

#### II. Engaging the Brain

##### A. Scavenger Hunt: Hidden Presents



1. Before class today, wrap a 3-4 small presents (candy bars, gift certificates for pizza, a True Love Waits mini book, etc.).
2. Hide these presents around the room before anyone arrives.
3. Explain to the group that somewhere in the room, there are hidden presents and that their mission is to find as many of the presents as they can in 3 minutes.
4. After inviting the group to ask questions to clarify the instructions, set the group free to search for the hidden presents.
5. More Elaborate Stringy Option
  - a. If you've got a little extra time and love for your kids to walk into class saying "Whoah! What's going on!?", try this option.



- *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.*
- [www.ymarchitects.com](http://www.ymarchitects.com)

- b. Get a different color of string for each hidden present. Tie the string to the hidden present and then stretch the string back and forth across the room in a chaotic pattern.
- c. Repeat this process with each of the different color strings, so that the space in the room is covered with this multi-color string maze.
- d. Have each of the four strings end at the same spot.
- e. Once the group has arrived, select four contestants (the ones who have a birthday closest to Christmas could work) and explain the rules of the game.
  - 1) Your object is to follow your colored string to its end.
  - 2) At the end of your string you will find a present.
- f. Invite the group to ask questions to clarify the instructions.
- g. Start the game (with the rest of the class watching).
- h. Once everyone has found their presents, have them open the presents and show them to the group.

## B. Wheel of Fortune

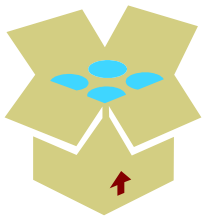


1. Using the chalkboard or a flip chart as the letter board, play this adapted version of the TV game show, Wheel of Fortune, with your group.
2. Explain the rules of the game.
  - a. Everyone is a contestant. Play begins with the first person in the front of the room (or the person in the circle closest to you) and then continues around the group. Once everyone has had a turn, the order repeats itself until the all four rounds are complete.
  - b. Anyone who guesses a consonant correctly gets 100 points for each time that letter appears in the word or phrase.
  - c. When a consonant is guesses correctly, that player gets another turn, until he or she guesses a letter incorrectly
  - d. Vowels can be bought for 100 points.
  - e. Only the person whose turn it is can solve the puzzle.
3. Invite the group to ask questions to clarify the instructions.
4. For each hidden word or phrase, draw the appropriate number of blanks and spaces on the flip chart or chalkboard.
5. If you're really feeling creative (and bold), you could get the minister's wife to dress as Vanna White to write in the letters that are guessed correctly.
6. Play the game using these hidden words and phrases.
  - a. Christmas Tree
  - b. Santa Claus
  - c. We Wish You a Merry Christmas
  - d. Wrapping Paper
  - e. Hidden Presence (spelling is key here)
7. Process Questions

- Based on what we have done so far, do you have any idea what we'll be talking about today?
- The last phrase is the title to the lesson today. Does anyone have a clue what that might be referring to?

### **C. Guy/Girl Competition: What's That Hiding in My Box?**

1. Bring an easily opened box to class today, along with at least two mystery objects (that you'll want to keep hidden from the group). Any objects can work—a ball, a leaf, a notebook, a piece of paper, etc.
2. Place one of the objects in the box and explain how this exercise will work.



- a. Inside the box, there is a hidden object.
- b. We'll start with the guys' team taking a look at the object and giving clues to the girls.
- c. I (the teacher) will show the box to one of the guys (without any of the other guys looking at it).
- d. That guy will give a clue about what is in the box. The rule is that he has to tell something true about the object, but his clue needs to be as obscure as possible so as not to give it away to the other team.
- e. The first girl gets to ask one yes or no question about what is in the box (the question can be specific like, "Is it a ball?" or more general like, "Is it alive?")
- f. If the girl guesses correctly, the girls win the round. If not, the next guy gets a look in the box and gives an obscure clue.
- g. The next girl gets to ask a yes or no question, and the entire process is repeated until the girls guess correctly (or until you think it has gone long enough).
- h. For the next round, the girls get to look in the box at a different object, and the boys get to ask questions and guess.

3. Invite the group to ask questions to clarify the instructions.
4. Divide the group into guys and girls teams (or any other configuration that would be healthy for your group).
5. Play the game.
6. Process Questions

- How did not knowing what was in the box make you feel?
- Were you more interested in the object in box when you didn't know what was in it or would you have been more interested in it if I had simply shown you the object in the beginning?
- Do you think God ever hides himself on purpose?

### III. Igniting the Heart

#### A. Pennies in the Cans (Psalm 13)



1. Hand out ten pennies to everyone in the group.
2. Have the group move into smaller groups of four-ish (with younger groups, you may want to have an adult in each group).
3. Place a tin can in the center of each group.
4. Explain that you are going to read a psalm to the group just to allow the group to get familiar with it.
5. Explain that when you read it through the second time, you want each person to drop pennies in the can when he or she hears something that is like how he or she has felt.
6. Explain that everyone needs to use all their pennies and that it is okay to use them all on one verse or to spread them out among 10 different verses.
7. Invite the group to ask questions to clarify the instructions.
8. Read through Psalm 13 once, just to help the group know where they may want to drop their pennies on the next round.
9. Read through Psalm 13 again, this time going slowly enough that you allow the clanging sounds to finish before moving on to the next verses.
10. Process Questions

- **Anything in particular that stood out to you in that psalm?**
- **From what you heard of the pennies, what did you learn about the part of this group that seems to relate most to our class's experience?**
- **Do you think it is pretty common for teenagers to feel like God has hidden his face from them?**
- **If you could ask the person who wrote this psalm a question about why he (David, according to tradition) wrote what he did, what would you ask?**
- **How can the writer ask "How long? ... How long?" and then end the psalm a few verses later saying "God has been good to me"? Don't those two ideas contradict each other?**
- **In what kinds of situations is it hardest for you to see God?**

#### B. 4x4 Journal Sheet Small Groups

1. Distribute Journal Sheets and pencils to the group.
2. Give the group 3-5 minutes to complete their sheets.
3. Have the group move back into the smaller groups of four-ish.
4. Have each group discover who in their group has gotten in trouble the most recently at school. Have that person be the leader of the group (if there is a situation in which someone has or may have gotten in serious trouble at school recently, you may want to use another way to select your small group leaders).
5. Explain that the groups will have three minutes to talk about as much of their journal sheet answers as they can.

6. Remind the groups that it is okay if they spend the entire time on just one question if it seems to be a question that the group really wants to chew on.
7. Explain that it is the group leaders' job to keep the discussion going.
8. Invite the group to ask questions to clarify the instructions.
9. Invite each group leader to start his or her small group discussion by telling an answer he or she gave to one of the journal questions and then invite someone else in the group to tell about an answer he or she gave.
10. After three minutes call time and ask the following process questions:

- **Any observations about what you talked about in your groups or how well this process worked to get you thinking about the hiddenness of God?**
- **In your group, did most of the folks see God's hiddenness as a good thing or a bad thing?**
- **How does the advent season emphasize God being hidden?**
- **If you were God, would you have made yourself more obvious to people? Why or why not?**

### **C. Spiritual Autobiography**

1. Give the following options for Today's Spiritual Autobiography:
  - a. Tell about a time when you wondered where God was or if God even exists.
  - b. If you happen to be going through one of those times right now, write a psalm or a poem asking God questions.
2. Invite the group to ask questions to clarify the instructions.
3. Give the group three minutes to write.
4. Collect their writings and add them to each of their spiritual autobiography folders (which you will present to them at the end of the year).

### **D. Bonus Video Idea: Jesus Christ Superstar**



1. Show the clip from the movie Jesus Christ Superstar in which Judas sings to Jesus, "If you'd come today, you could have reached the whole nation. Israel in 4 BC had no mass communication."
2. Before showing the clip, explain who the characters are, and invite the group to listen for what Judas' problem with Jesus was.
3. Process Questions
  - **What was Judas' problem with Jesus?**
  - **Do you think folks today have that same problem?**
  - **Would anyone at your school have that kind of attitude toward Jesus?**

## **IV. Taking It Home**

### **A. Just for Me**

1. Move the group into a single circle.
2. Explain that to close the class today, each person will check out by finishing this statement, "The one thing I want to remember about our session today is..."
3. Invite the group to ask questions to clarify the instructions.
4. Start by telling the one thing you want to remember and go around the group (remember to be brief).

**B. Before class begins, arrange for one of the students to close the class in prayer today. Call on him or her at this point to pray.**

↓ JOURNAL SHEET BELOW ↓

**JOURNAL SHEET**  
**WHEN GOD HIDES HIS PRESENCE**  
**PSALM 13**

1. When you were growing up, how and where were your presents hidden before Christmas morning? Can you remember a time when you looked for them or tried desperately to figure out what was in one of them?
  
2. When God is an MIA (missing in action), what does it make you think?  
 God may not really exist.  
 There must be something wrong with my faith.  
 God just goes invisible sometimes. It's just a normal part of my faith.  
 I need to start seeking God more eagerly.  
 When I don't feel close to God, I know that God isn't the one who has moved.
  
3. In your relationship with God, which happens more often?  
 God hides from you.                       You hide from God.
  
4. If you were God and you wanted to reveal yourself to your people, how would you do it?  
 I would leave traces of myself everywhere so that those who wanted to find me could.  
 I would make myself obvious with miracles, so that there would be no question.  
 I'd make the good people who believed in me prosper and make the people who didn't believe have problems.  
 I would make periodic, surprise, personal appearances and immediately kill anyone who didn't believe.  
 I would come disguised as a person just like them.  
 I would hire a public relations firm to work out major international infomercials and make appearances on Saturday Night Live and during half-time at the Super Bowl.
  
5. Some skeptics say that if God exists, God must not be a God of love, because God didn't make himself obvious to everyone. How would you respond to that argument?

6. How do you respond to these random thoughts from that genius of yesteryear, Blaise Pascal?  
*Instead of complaining that God has hidden himself, you will give him thanks for revealing himself as much as he has, and you will thank him too for not revealing himself to wise men full of pride and unworthy of knowing so holy a God (Penses, F-394).*  
*If he had wished to overcome the obstinacy of the most hardened, he could have done so by revealing himself to them so plainly that they could not doubt the truth of his essence... This is not the way he wished to appear when he came in mildness..., that he wished to deprive them of the good they did not deserve (Penses, F-149).*

I agree, because...

I disagree, because...