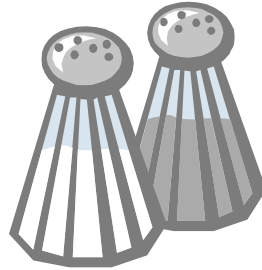


SPICE RACK®

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!

“RAPTURE ALERT”

(A Primer on Thinking Christianly)

I. Gathering (Attendance, Announcements, First Timers)

II. Engaging the Brain

A. The Rapture Report

1. Mini-Lecture: Last time you were given the challenge to find the word “rapture” in the Bible. We offered a \$10 reward for anyone who could find that word.
2. Process Questions
 - How many of you have heard the word “rapture” before last week?
 - Outside of this class, what have you heard about the rapture?

- Were any of you able to find the word rapture in the Bible (not in the notes at the bottom of the page in the Bible or in the back of the Bible, but actually in the text of the Bible itself)?
- What does the fact that there is no such word in the Bible suggest? (Possible answers: It must be implied somewhere; it can't be true if the word's not there; it sounds like it's not that big a deal to God).
- What do you think about people who have got the timetable of the end of the world figured out?

B. Tales From the Other Side of Weird

1. If you've got a group that might enjoy a little off-the-beaten path, somewhat irreverent true story, try this one out on the group:

Arkansas Woman Killed in Mistaken Rapture

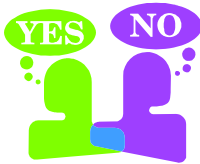
by Elroy Willis **ARKANSAS CITY (EAP)** -- A Little Rock woman was killed yesterday after leaping through her moving car's sun roof during an incident best described as a "mistaken rapture" by dozens of eye-witnesses. Thirteen other people were injured after a twenty-car pile-up resulted from people trying to avoid hitting the woman who was apparently convinced that the rapture was occurring when she saw twelve people floating up into the air, and then passed a man on the side of the road who she claimed was Jesus. "She started screaming "He's back!, He's back!" and climbed right out of the sunroof and jumped off the roof of the car," said Everet Williams, husband of 28-year-old Georgann Williams who was pronounced dead at the scene. "I was slowing down but she wouldn't wait till I stopped," Williams said. She thought the rapture was happening and was convinced that Jesus was gonna lift her up into the sky," he went on to say. "This is the strangest thing I've seen since I've been on the force," said Paul Madison, first officer on the scene. Madison questioned the man who looked like Jesus and discovered that he was on his way to a toga costume party, when the tarp covering the bed of his pickup truck came loose and released twelve blow-up life-sized girl dolls filled with helium which then floated up into the sky. Ernie Jenkins, 32, of Fort Smith, who's been told by several of his friends that he looks like Jesus, pulled over and lifted his arms into the air in frustration, and said "Come back," just as the Williams' car passed him, and Mrs. Williams was sure that it was Jesus lifting people up into the sky as they passed by him, according to her husband, who says his wife loved Jesus more than anything else. When asked for comments about the twelve dolls, Jenkins replied "This is all just too weird for me. I never expected anything like this to happen."

[quotation is undated]

C. Mock Debate: How Do We Decide What We Really Believe?

1. Three Corners

- a. Explain to the group that you want to give them three different opinions, each of which will be represented by a different corner of the room.
- b. Explain that after you give the three opinions that you want the group members to move to one of the three corners, depending on which opinion is the closest to their own.
- c. Invite the group to ask questions to clarify the instructions.
- d. Give these three opinions, pointing out a different corner for each one:



- 1) It is important for every Christians to know what the book of Revelation has to say about the end of the world.
- 2) It is silly to study what the book of Revelation says about the end of the world because we'll never really know for sure. There are so many interpretation and so many people have been really sure and have been really wrong before.
- 3) It's not a waste of time to study the book of Revelation, but it's not all that important either.

2. Process Question for someone in each corner: **Why did you choose the corner you did?**
3. Select an outspoken person from each corner to be the debater for his or her side.
4. Give each spokesperson a research team of one other person to help the debater prepare his or her arguments.
5. Send the debaters (spokespersons) and the research teams out of the room for 3 minutes to prepare their arguments.
6. Give the following instructions to the rest of the class:
 - a. We want to "stack" this debate, just to see how influential the opinion of the crowd is on the way we think (or don't think) about God.
 - b. Let's determine which side we think is the most likely to win the debate.
 - c. Once we pick that side, let's agree to encourage the side we think is least likely to win.
 - d. Here are some ways you can give some non-obvious encouragement to the underdog side: nodding heads and grunts of approval (practice a little). The idea is at the end of the debate, the group would be enthusiastically voicing their support for the underdog side.
7. Invite the group to ask questions to clarify the instructions.
8. After selecting the underdog, bring the debaters back in.
9. Explain the rules of the debate
 - a. Each debater will have one minute to make his or her case.
 - b. The opponents will have 30 seconds each to question the debater who has just spoken.



- c. After both debaters have spoken, cross-examined and consulted with their research teams, each debater has 30 seconds for a closing argument.
10. Allow the debate teams to ask questions to clarify the instructions.
 11. Do the debate (with pre-planned, one-sided encouragement from the rest of the class).
 12. When the debate is over, ask the following process questions.

→ **To the Crowd: Who won this debate? (they will all cheer furiously for the underdog).**

→ **Interrupting Confession: Explain to the debaters that the class was set up to cheer for one side only.**

→ **To the “Losing Team”**

- **How did it feel to have everyone think you were wrong?**
- **Did it make you feel stronger or weaker about what you were saying?**

→ **To the “Winning Team”**

- **How did it feel when you realized that everyone in the crowd agreed with you?**
- **Were you more or less likely to think critically about what you were saying when you knew you had the crowd behind you?**

→ **To the Class**

- **Do you think most people decide what they believe (about God, about right and wrong, about Revelation) by thinking or by listening to what people around them think?**
- **Have you ever heard of religious groups that wound up doing some foolish (or deadly) things because they simply agreed with what everyone else in the group believed? (Examples: Jim Jones in Guyana, “Heaven’s Gate,” etc.).**
- **Do you agree or disagree with this statement: People who stand against the crowd are usually right.**

D. Review: Picture Please



1. Explain that just by way of review that you want to collect visual reminders of what the group has been talking about for the past few weeks.
2. Distribute crayons and paper to the group.

3. Have each person take three minutes and draw a picture of what he or she remembers so far from the previous classes on the book of Revelation.
4. Once the drawings are done, ask for a few volunteers to show their pictures.
5. Process Questions
 - From what you've just seen, how good a grasp on this book does our class have?
 - What are the major questions you would like to have answered before we finish this study?
 - (If last week a few people agreed to take a Revelation question to someone they respected). Those of you that chose to ask someone outside of class about one of our unanswered "Revelation" questions, what did you find out?
 - Since next week is our last week together in this book of the Bible, are there any questions that you want to make sure we focus on next week? (Collect these questions and consider bringing in a guest expert next week to answer some of them).

III. Igniting the Heart

A. Numbers, Numbers, Numbers: I've Heard Only 144,000 Make It to Heaven?



1. Invite the group to brainstorm all the numbers they can remember from the book of Revelation.
2. A Look at the 144,000 (Revelation 7)
 - a. Opening Mini-Lecture: One of most discussed numbers in the book of Revelation is the number 144,000. We're going to take a look at a number of different interpretations about that number, as an example of the many different ways that people interpret parts of this book.
 - b. Interrupting Question: *Does anyone remember anything about this number from what you've read or what we've talked about so far?*
 - c. Introduce Revelation 7.
 - 1) Explain that you will be reading the passage that contains the 144,000.
 - 2) Explain also that some people believe that there will actually only be 144,000 people who make it to heaven.
 - 3) Ask the group members to listen to the passage and try to determine whether there is any basis for that belief in this passage.
 - d. Read Revelation 7:1-8.

e. Process Questions

- Did you hear anything in these verses that would make you agree with those who think that the 144,000 will be in heaven? (Read the passage again if necessary).
- If this number is not referring to who is going to heaven, what do you think it IS referring to?
- Take a look at the next verse—Revelation 7:9. Does that verse clarify whether the 144,000 is the total number of people in heaven?

f. Mini-Lecture: There are three common interpretations about who these 144,000 are:

- 1) **Jewish converts during the great tribulation** who will witness to the Gentiles. The idea here is that there will be 144,000 converted to Christianity after all the Christians are “raptured” from the earth. According to this interpretation, these Jewish converts will lead many Gentiles to Christ. Here the number is literal (this is the perspective of the popular Left Behind books).
- 2) **Christians who die in the great tribulation.** The number here could be literal (exactly 144,000) or symbolic ($144=12$ [all the disciples] \times 12 [all the tribes of Israel]). The idea of the symbolic number is that ALL believers are sealed.
- 3) **Christians who will be alive during the great tribulation and will be somehow protected by God.**

g. Process Questions



- Which explanation seems most likely to you?
- Does anyone have an alternative interpretation?
- How important is it to have the right answer to this number question?
- Listen closely: How important is it to know that it is not that important what the right answer is?
- Suppose you lived in Afghanistan right now and you were watching your friends and family be tortured and killed. Do you think you might believe that you were in the “great tribulation?”
- Some Christians believe that all Christians will be “raptured” before any real suffering begins. How would you predict that those people would respond to normal experiences of suffering in their lives?

B. Where Did This Whole Rapture Idea Come From Anyway?

1. Remind the group of what they have already discovered:

- a. The word “rapture” never actually appears in the Bible.
 - b. It is sometimes easy for people to be more clear about things in Revelation than Revelation itself is—an approach that can actually lead to some unbiblical conclusions.
2. Intro Question: So if the Bible never uses the word “rapture,” and if the idea of a rapture is not in the book of Revelation, do you have any idea where did that idea came from?
3. Rapture Hunt
 - a. Explain that you are about to read through a few passages from the New Testament that suggest the idea of a rapture of believers.
 - b. Humming Tip for ADD Groups
 - 1) If you have a group that has trouble staying focused when they are just listening, invite the group to participate in the reading of these verses by humming.
 - 2) Explain that as you are reading, you want the group to hum on a single note very softly, and that when you read something that they wonder about or have trouble believing, they are to hum a little more loudly.
 - 3) Before you actually use this method, you’ll want to practice the process and invite the group to ask questions to clarify the instructions.
4. Read the following passages to the group:

I Thessalonians 4:13-17
 Matthew 24:36-44
 Luke 17:34-35
5. Process Questions
 - **Did you hear anything in these verses that you have never heard before?**
 - **What do you think it means?**
 - **ADD Group Question: When did you hear the loudest humming?**
 - **If you were to summarize the key idea of all three of these passages, what would you say?**
 - **How prepared do you think you are for this happening?**
 - **How would people at your school respond if what is described here actually happened?**

C. Summing It Up Survey

1. Pass out a sheet of scratch paper or a 3x5 card to each group member.
2. Explain to the group that they will be completing a sentence on each side.

- a. Side One: “What our church believes about the end of the world is...
- b. Side Two: “What I believe about the end of the world is...



- 3. Take up the sheets and tabulate them for survey results that you will give next week.
- 4. Process Questions

- Which of the two questions was more difficult?
- Did any of you have answers longer than one sentence?
- Some people think that what you believe about the end of the world makes a huge difference in the way you live today. Other people think it makes no difference at all. What do you think?

D. Mini-Lecture: Thinking Christianly

- 1. As you write the following phrase on the board, explain to the group that you want to give them one solid principle for interpreting the Bible is...

LEAN IS BETTER THAN LUXURIOUS.

- 2. Process Questions



- What does lean mean? (think lean meat--all the fat has been trimmed away).
- What would be a luxurious interpretation of the book of Revelation? (developing an exact interpretation for every symbol)
- How do you know what parts to trim away and what parts to leave as true?

You might offer two suggestions here:

- What is the plain sense of the text?
- How does this text fit with the rest of Scripture?

IV. Taking It Home

A. Gullibility or Receptivity

- 1. Explain that there seem to be two equally dangerous errors that Christians fall into:
 - a. That, out of a desire to be receptive to God, we are so “open-minded” that we are gullible enough to believe all kinds of nonsense.

- b. That, out of a desire to love God with all of our minds, we become skeptical and reject some of the things that God actually is trying to say to us.

2. Check Out Question

- a. Before the group leaves today, ask each person to “check out” by answering the check out question.
- b. Check out Question: **Which of the above errors would you be more likely to fall into? And why?**
- c. Invite the group to ask questions to clarify the instructions before the first person “checks out.”
- d. Beginning with the person with the youngest sibling, have the group members check out by answering the question.

3. Process Questions

- Which do you think our church needs to guard against more —being too gullible and believing everything or being too skeptical and believing nothing?
- Which do your parents need to guard against more?

B. Before the group leaves give them the assignment of next week bringing to class anything that they can find with the numbers 666 on it.



C. As you pray for the group today, pray that God would give them wisdom to hold tightly to the things that matter most to our Lord and hold loosely those things that are non-essential.