

Teaching Tips

Communication

1. When recording answers from others, if you feel a revision needs to be made, rephrase it and ask the person if that's acceptable. (e.g. If the answer offered is "to pray" but you're writing down items instead of actions, you can ask, "Can I write 'prayer'?")
2. When a student shares a word their group did not understand, (i.e. benevolent, grace, or redemption) invite students from other groups to volunteer to explain. This can allow the students to teach each other.
3. Think/Pair/Share is a common tool to help students process a question together. The instruction to repeat their partners' answers allows for them to participate without the anxiety of giving their own opinions to a larger group. The following format is standard:
 - a. When I say "go," you are going to think about your answer to this question: [insert question].
 - b. You are going to find a partner and share with him or her what you have been thinking.
 - c. After [insert number] minutes, I will draw us all back together. Be prepared to share your partner's answer.
 - d. Any questions? [Allow students to make clarifications, if needed.]
 - e. OK, go!
4. When asking a large group a question and you're looking for responses, use the following instructions:
 - a. Think about your answer to this question: [insert question].
 - b. After a minute, I'll ask for volunteers to give their answers. If you're ready to volunteer your answer, raise your hand [or you can give another signal like touch your nose].
5. Side coaching: While students are talking, move from group to group. Listen briefly, and if appropriate, add a small bit of information to help clarify an idea, or answer questions the students might have. Rather than directly answering questions, try to lead students to answer their own questions, often by asking simpler or clearer versions of their questions. Use this time to get a feel for the mood of the group, the degree to which they understand the material, and how engaged they are.
6. If there are answers still missing at the end of a discussion, offer them as suggestions and ask students if they agree or disagree.
7. "Does anyone have a question?" is worded in such a way as to isolate the few who didn't understand one of your instructions. Often people will ask, "Does everyone understand?" No one can actually answer that without reading the minds of the whole group. Phrase the question to allow the few individuals who do have questions to ask them.
8. "Wait time" is important to allow students to time to think. Don't be afraid of some silence, and don't be afraid of the natural ebb and flow of a discussion. If a student presents an answer that is almost correct or almost at the point you want then say something like "I like what you said about can you expand on that." If they are not getting to the realizations you are hoping for then prompt them with further questions like "We believe God is all powerful—who is stronger

than God? Is the media stronger than God? If the media pokes fun at Christians, does that mean that what they say about us is true? Who defines us? Are media stereotypes about different people groups true?"

9. It's great to have students ask questions. At times, those questions may sidetrack the conversation. Use your discretion to prayerfully decide whether to continue that discussion. At times, it may be the Holy Spirit leading the conversation to something specific he wants them to see. At other times, it may be a distraction from where God was leading in the first place, in which case you could discreetly postpone the discussion for another time. For example, say, "That's a great question that we should take a look at later on [tonight, next week, etc.]."
10. When giving instructions (such as those in the numbered list), start by telling them to follow the instructions when you say "go". Give the instructions as clearly and concise as possible. Ask if they have any questions. You can also ask them to repeat the instructions to check for understanding. When you feel they are ready, then say "go".
11. When discussing as a large group, remind students that you will acknowledge who's turn it is to share and they should be respectful of the person talking.
12. If, after the first person answers, the following people have the same answer, ask them to rephrase it in their own words.
13. Some questions can seem easy to answer. Develop the answer further by having them justify/prove their answer with other facts. You can also play "devil's advocate" and challenge their answer. If you do plan to do that, brief your students that you are indeed playing "devil's advocate"; otherwise, they may feel you're attacking them personally.
14. When assisting students in a composition, avoid doing too much of the job for them. If they are having trouble getting ideas out ask them leading questions like, "what are you thankful for?" and "what are some things you might need help with throughout the day?"

Connection

1. If you communicate with your students through the week via text, Facebook, Twitter, email, etc., posting a reminder (of either a specific action they were going to take or a key verse they studied) is a great way to help them remember the lesson.
2. If your students are more digitally-oriented, consider sending your follow-up content either as texts, through social media channels or email during the week.
3. Accountability partners can be vital in the follow-up of an action step in a lesson. Depending on your dynamics, you may either have students choose their own partner, you can assign one or the student can be accountable to a leader.

Involvement

1. Involve others in the information gathering (like writing answers on a chart paper). This helps to give ownership to other students or leaders in the activity even though it may be outside their comfort zone. Use your discernment in situations where you may be the best person to do this (instead of "forcing" someone else to participate).
2. Some students are very willing and able to read publicly. Others (whether because of their reading level or fear of public speaking) may need some lead-time to prepare. If you're asking a

student who's not as comfortable, give him or her the passage to read ahead of time. Consider using a translation or paraphrase that will be easily understood by your group (e.g., the Message). If the passage is long (i.e., more than 2 verses), consider breaking it up and having multiple readers.

3. Name groups in some creative way. For example, by Gospels (Matthew group, Mark group, Luke group, John group), colours (Red group, Blue group), etc. Having the students begin in their home groups will help later with the multiple transitions that the students will be making.
4. Jigsaw involves splitting the large group into home groups, which then regroup into expert groups. A home group will have a representative in each expert group. The easiest method for dividing a group for Jigsaw is to use a deck of playing cards. If your group has fewer than 6 students, your whole group will act as the home group and you only then need to divide your group into 3. If you have more than 24 people, you may want to split your expert groups in half to make the room more manageable (e.g., all hearts with odd numbers form one group).
5. The activity will go more smoothly if students know what to expect from the start. Explain the activity so students can pay attention instead of wondering what will happen next.
6. An exit ticket is a teaching strategy used to assess that students have reflected upon the material you have taught or discussed. Essentially you prepare a short question, one that can be answered in one or two minutes on a small paper no bigger than half of an 8.5 x 11. The questions can range from a content question showing knowledge and understanding, to an opinion question demonstrating synthesis and evaluation. You can also allow the students to respond to a more personal question related to the topic discussed, allowing the students to express themselves in a fresh way. Hand out the question on the paper, "the ticket", before students leave, allow them time to respond, and as they leave, they hand you the "ticket" with the question answered. Among other things, Exit Tickets help you determine if your students have understood your lesson, give you an opportunity to learn more about your students for future lesson plans, or for you as a youth leader as you pray for your youth.
7. If you're going to use an example that involves someone they know personally, especially one of their peers, make sure you receive permission ahead of time
8. After an activity that requires volunteers, always have the group thank the volunteers after the activity is complete.
9. Having multiple people (i.e. 2-3) read the same passage allows for reinforcement of the content with different voices and includes a wider number of participants.

Practical

Group Work

1. Name these groups in some creative way. For example, by Gospels (Matthew group, Mark group, Luke group, John group), colours (Red group, Blue group), etc. Having the students begin in their home groups will help later with the multiple transitions that the students will be making.
2. When separating into groups, be as specific as you can. While some instructions suggest separating students into groups of 3-4, choose an optimal number and have an exception. (e.g. If

you have 29 students, you can suggest students gather in groups of 3 and, knowing there are 2 extra people, have 2 groups adopt each of the extra students.)

3. Dividing students into groups can be a chaotic moment where misbehaviour typically occur. There may be moments you allow students to form their own groups (usually with friends they know). Other times, it's best for you as the facilitator to organize the groups. This could include:
 - a. Clustering them by proximity.
 - b. "Randomly" grouping them based on common features. e.g. Have them line up based on birthdates and then cluster them.
 - c. Before your meeting, assign who will be in which group (while being prepared to include any visitors to those assignments).
4. Using the "folded line technique for picking partners": have the students stand in a line (this can be in response to a question, or by height, or birthday or number of letters in their name) have the students hold hands/interlock arms, and take one end of the line and walk to the other end, folding it in half. Students work with the partner who is now across from them.
5. While smaller groups are doing an activity, circulate and listen to their discussions without intervening.
6. Typically, a small group between 3 to 5 people is ideal. If you need to, divide students into smaller groups but have the same task for multiple groups. For instance, if the lesson asks you to create 4 small groups but you have 40 people (i.e. it would be 10 per group), make 8 groups and have pairs of groups do the same task separately. If groups are too large, some students will melt into the background and not really participate. If groups are too small, students could become overwhelmed with the task. A good balance will allow everyone to participate and work together to complete the task.
7. During group work, it is helpful to check how much time they still need (i.e., allow the duration time to be adaptable). When the time allotted is nearing an end, ask who needs more time. If the majority do, then give 2 to 3 more minutes and check back. If only a few do, give 1 minute for them to wrap up.
8. You might want to predetermine where the groups work. Alternatively, you may allow the students to find their own places to work. Choose what works best for your students.
9. If you have close-knit friends or new youth out, you may have students purposely trying to stay close to the people they know. Feel free to step in, redirect them, exchange partners or stop these friends from being partners more than once. You may want to make the rule, "you must speak to someone new for each question," if you feel this is going to be a problem in your group. However, be sensitive to youth who may not yet be believers, and so will want to stick near their friends so as to assess appropriate behaviour.

Technology/ Handouts

1. Be aware that there is no control over what preview videos are displayed on the sidebars of the YouTube website. As well, it is suggested that you preload the video to avoid showing the commercials at the beginning. As with any media, we suggest that you watch this video ahead of time to ensure it is appropriate for your group. If necessary, skip the video and continue the lesson.

2. If students are answering multiple questions, it's best to either provide a handout with the questions or display/project them for everyone to see.
3. Disable annotations on YouTube by clicking on the settings wheel in the bottom right corner of the video. That will stop the pop ups that may happen during playback.
4. Project the verse on a screen to allow visual students the opportunity to see it.

Timing

1. Transition times are when students get off topic or get distracted. Giving clear instructions and a length of time for the transition is a good way to simplify the process. If you naturally give a short break in the class this would be an excellent time to do so. Instruct the students to come back and sit in their home groups. (e.g. "Thank you class, I heard some really great discussions happening and am impressed with how well you tackled a difficult subject. Now we need to go back to our home groups (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) and share our newfound expertise. Let's take one minute and organize ourselves back into our home groups. When you do so, begin with situation 1 and that person may share for a few minutes and then move to situation 2 and so on...")
2. When transitioning from one activity to another, clear instructions are crucial. e.g. "Everyone sit where you are, and turn and face me. We are going to transition now to our group work. I will give you the instructions and divide you into your groups and after you have your instructions, we will move."
3. Use a time countdown to keep students on task as well as to prepare for a transition to another part of the activity. e.g., Call out "We have 5 minutes left."

Food/Snacks

1. Whenever you serve food, ensure you are aware of any food allergies. As a general rule, ensure your food is nut-free.

Miscellaneous

1. If your students are not familiar with finding passages in the Bible, bookmark them ahead of time.
2. Consider bringing some small prizes for students that get the right answer!
3. For a more contemplative atmosphere, you could turn off part of the lights.

Intelligences

1. You may want to physically demonstrate the logistics of an activity as you're giving instructions
2. Art Gallery walk is a way for students to review their peers' work without external pressures. Like a museum, they would go around looking at one piece of work for about 20 seconds before moving to the next piece. Here are some guidelines:
 - a. no talking during the viewing

- b. no judging of others' work
 - c. no criticizing the work
 - d. no put downs
3. Think/pair/share: there are usually two common occurrences: a. Nobody talks first. You can pre-determine who will go first by adding the instructions "the person with the longest hair goes first", or "the person with the most red on goes first." b. One person dominates the allotted time and the second person does not get a chance to speak. You can solve this problem by calling out at half time – "now change, and the other person speaks". This method uses the following steps:
 - a. Students should be in pairs (you can decide how students will be paired up).
 - b. Each student reflects on their answer to the given question.
 - c. Students share their answer with their partner.
 - d. Each student should be ready to share their partner's answer with the large group
 4. Placemat: This method uses the following steps:
 - a. Divide the large group into equal #s (between 3-5) in each small group.
 - b. On a large chart paper, have them draw a circle in the middle and divide the rest of the paper so that each person has 1 section of the paper in front of them.
 - c. In the first round, give students 3 minutes to write their answers to the given question. There is no talking at this point. (You can adjust the time accordingly).
 - d. In the subsequent rounds (e.g. if there are 4 people, there are 3 remaining rounds), turn the sheet so that the adjacent person's answers are in front of you. Students have 1 minute to comment on those answers with a check-mark in agreement, an X in disagreement, or other comments or ideas based on those answers. (Students do not need to reiterate what they wrote originally in that section.)
 - e. Repeat step "d" until each person has reviewed everyone else's answers.
 - f. Give students 5 minutes to consolidate all their answers into 1 summary statement or into a top 5 list (depending on what the given question is).
 - g. Have a spokesperson share their group's final answer with the large group
 5. When asking questions, consider posting the question somewhere visible and verbally say it. This way, you can help both your visual and auditory learners understand the question.
 6. Students respond to having examples of a creation/project, particularly from those that they care for and appreciate. If possible, create an example prior to this activity.
 7. Changing physical location and position can open our imaginations to ideas we wouldn't have thought of before (also great for tactile and spatial learners)

Resources

1. Mind Map is a teaching tool where you record and direct conversation by choosing which points to highlight and explore more explicitly. You can record ideas with point form, or pictures, or one word. Go to http://www.eworkshop.on.ca/edu/pdf/Mod36_coop_placemat.pdf to see how you can draw a mind map and direct conversation.
2. There are many creative ways to separate people into groups. One random-generating program is found at <http://www.superteachertools.us/instantclassroom/group-maker.php#.VOetvkrLiw> (which you can also use on some mobile devices).

3. Concept sketches allow students to depict a series of concepts and their relationships together in a drawing. The key isn't to make the drawing a masterpiece of art. The sketch summarizes the concept with graphics of the various components, and uses icons and words to identify key components and relationships. (For a more detailed explanation of concept sketches and to see examples, download this Word document at https://d32ogoqmya1dw8.cloudfront.net/files/NAGTWorkshops/coursedesign/tutorial/concept_sketch_1.doc).

Volunteer Leaders

1. You and your leaders should also be familiar with your church's child protection policy and what the law requires in terms of reporting allegations of abuse.
2. If you have leaders helping you, it is a good idea to brief your leaders before the activity so they can also circulate and help students really connect with the activities by thinking about them in detail.
3. Don't be afraid of silence; when you are standing in front of a group the silence always seems longer to you than it does to your group. Some people feel awkward about speaking right away, and if you, or your leaders, answer too soon you may take away an insightful answer from one of your students.