

# WAYS TO REACH TWEENS AND TEENS—AN ARRAY OF TOOLS

By Gretchen L. Keith

## STARTING YOUR YEAR *Welcome new students (the leader joins in)*

**Deserted Island** If you were going to be exiled for one year and could take one book, one piece of music, and one other thing—what would you take? (You will be supplied with a Bible and food. Your wild card choice can not be a way to get off of the island!) Share your answers.

**Would You Rather...?** Discuss open-ended questions such as: Would you rather not be able to hear or not be able to see? Go for a walk or play a video game? Listen to music or make music? Vacation at the beach or in the mountains?

**Name That Person!** Divide group into 2 teams and have each person write 5 clues to their identity on an index card, starting with more obscure clues and gradually become more obvious. Teams draw a card from other team's pile and try to identify the person using as few clues as possible. (Note: Small groups may opt to have 3-4 clues so it isn't just a process of elimination.)

## GETTING THEIR ATTENTION *Generate interest in the topic*

**Word Association** Brainstorm responses to a key word relating to a story or topic (supplied by the leader). For example, brainstorm words associated with help" as a lead-in to talking about charity. (Allow 4 minutes.)

**Infer** Give students several key words from the story or topic and ask them to guess what you will be discussing together.

**Example (for Divine Providence):**

What do these words tell you about today's topic?

*protect*

*lead*

*evil*

*freedom*



**Anticipate** Provide 3-5 True or False statements about a topic or event that is likely to stimulate discussion. The questions can be answered independently, in pairs or by the whole group.

*Examples of suitable topics:* the nature of hell, the role of guardian angels, dreams, laughter, etc.

**Scenario** Present a case study or scenario that will lead into your topic. This could be an article from a newspaper, a personal anecdote, a video clip, or a hypothetical situation. If the main character has to make a decision of some kind, stop and ask the teens what they might do in that situation. Tell them the rest of the story and discuss it. *Extending the Activity:* See if anyone wants to mention a situation that seems similar.

## ENCOURAGING DISCUSSION *Get them talking to develop and share their thoughts*



### **Open-ended Questions**

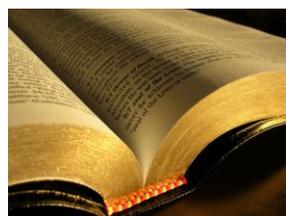
- Personal Experience—What makes it difficult to...?
- Implication—If this were true, what does that suggest about...?
- Opinion—If you were Peter, how might you have responded when you saw Jesus heal people?

**"Philosopher's Chair"** Read passages from the Heavenly Doctrine. Read a statement expressing one conclusion. Have students decide whether they agree or disagree with the statement. Participants move to one side of the room or the other, depending on their perspective on the topic. Participants can switch sides whenever the debate changes their minds.

**Fishbowl** If you have a large group it can be helpful to arrange a fishbowl discussion where participants sit in two concentric circles. Those sitting in the center are in "the fishbowl" and discuss the topic while others observe. When someone wants to join the discussion, a person in the fishbowl trades places.



**True or False?** Respond to a brief reading by deciding whether or not you support statements expressing facts, inferences and opinions about it. Tally the answers for each question to identify areas prime for discussion. (Note: Thought-provoking statements that don't necessarily have one right answer work well!)

**READING THE WORD** *Interact with the Old Testament, New Testament, and Heavenly Doctrine*

**What Does It Tell Us?** While reading or hearing from the Word, look for something it tells us about:

1. the Lord
2. human nature
3. something the Lord wants us to do
4. are there better choices that could have been made?

Does it raise any questions for us that we would like to explore?

**Perspectives** Ask each person to focus on a different aspect of the story: *e.g.* the setting, problems and what caused them, the message the Lord or His representative is giving the people, the feelings of the people involved, *etc.*

**Variation:** Have each person select someone from the story. Read the story aloud, and then ask how they think their character feels. Let them give their perspective as if they were that character.

*Examples of stories that might work well for this activity:* Healing the Blind Man (John 9), Jesus Meets Zacchaeus (Luke 19), Ten Visitors to Heaven (*Conjugal Love* 2-25).

**Character Study** Give small groups 15-20 key references to study a key person in the Word. Each person looks up 3-5 references, then shares what they learned about the person. Try to find out:

1. What does his or her name mean?
2. What is the person's occupation?
3. What admirable qualities or strengths does this person have? What weaknesses?
4. How does this person respond to a Divine call? A crisis? A message or instruction from the Lord?
5. How did this person influence others? What were his or her accomplishments?

*Examples of characters for this activity:* Moses, Joshua, Samson, Hannah, Samuel, Daniel, Peter, John, Mary.



**What Does It Mean?** Use [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com) to search for a keyword (such as prayer, faith, servant, peace, *etc.*) and assemble quotes for students to use as a basis for exploring its meaning. Then talk about what the Heavenly Doctrine teaches, infilling these ideas. (You may wish to have them look at [www.heavenlydoctrines.org](http://www.heavenlydoctrines.org) to look for what the New Church teaches.)

**ENGAGING WITH THE TEACHINGS OF THE WORD**

**What If?** Present quotes from OT & NT and discuss their meaning and possible implications—viewed apart from teachings in the Heavenly Doctrine.

**Favorite Passage** Bring in a short passage to share and explain why it is special to you. (Have some passages ready for those who may come without one.)

**Dramatization** Dramatize a story from the Word. Spiritual experiences (also known as Memorable Relations) can work well with this age level. Write a script for a play or have a narrator read a portion of the Word while others dramatize the action.

**Disclosure Game** Leader writes 5 clues about someone in the Old Testament, the New Testament or the Heavenly Doctrine. Teens try to guess his or her identity with as few clues as possible. Have teens write the name on an index card (turning it over to hide the name) and continue until all clues are read or everyone has guessed who it is.

**Example from a NT story:**

1. I witnessed Jesus do miracles.
2. I asked a lot of questions.
3. I am one of His disciples.
4. I saw His transfiguration.
5. I heard the cock crow.

**Variation:** This could also be done as teams, with each team coming up with clues for 3 different people in the Word. Start with more obscure clues and then gradually make them more obvious. The other team tries to identify the person using as few clues as possible.

**EXPANDING YOUR THINKING** *Try new ways of looking at abstract concepts*

**Metaphor Puzzles** Introduce this kind of thinking by asking: Which is softer—a whisper or kitten’s fur? Which is more curious—a monkey or a rook? Which is like a discussion—a battle or a ballet?



**Metaphors in the Word** Use metaphors and analogies from the Heavenly Doctrines to help teens understand abstract concepts and processes.

*Tip:* Use NewSearch 4 to help you find these analogies by doing a Boolean search with a spiritual concept or another target word in close proximity to “like”, e.g. charity w/2 like.

*Variation:* Invite teens to generate metaphors for a process like spiritual rebirth.

**Value Analogies** Ask thought-provoking questions like these one at a time for discussion: 1) Which has more elasticity, friendship or honesty? 2) Which requires more energy, competition or cooperation?

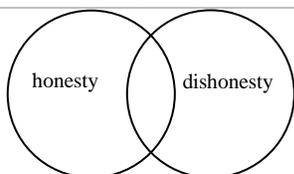
**Concept Analogies** What attributes does a \_\_\_\_\_ have? (stone, river, tree, gold, rainbow, sun, rain, etc.) Compare your list with a partner and then with the whole group. How might these attributes help us understand the spiritual concept(s) that this object represents?

**Attributes** Talk about positive qualities or characteristics of people, institutions, aspects of nature, etc. Look for ways that attributes for dissimilar things can help you identify valuable traits in something else.

**Word Play** Brainstorm words that relate to something abstract like faith, charity, love, church, evil, etc. Discuss the list when the group is done brainstorming. Circle any words that people feel help them understand the concept in a new way.

**THINKING VISUALLY**

**Montage a Word** Enrich the meaning of a word (such as worship, church, disciple, salvation) by assembling a collage of pictures, newspaper headlines, and words. This could be a fun extension of the “What Does It Mean?” activity mentioned above.



**Honesty Venn Diagram**

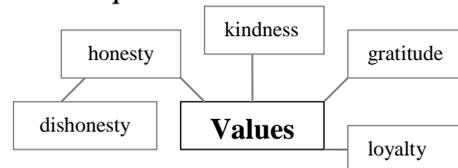
**Venn Diagram** Compare two people or ideas and identify how they are different and how they are the same—where they intersect.

**Guided Imagery** Create a script. Invite teens to visualize something as if they are an observer or a participant in what is happening. E.g. observing hell or what Swedenborg describes in a Memorable Relation.

**Mural or Banner** Illustrate a theme—e.g. “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12)—by making a poster, mural or a banner.

**Word Mapping** Brainstorm words or ideas you associate with a concept such as: charity, honesty, evil, etc. Then arrange them into a cluster of words to organize your thinking about the concept. This can also be used with a story from the Word.

**Word Map**



**An Idea Sketch of Truth**

**Cartooning** Use stick figures to illustrate a sequence of events to depict cause and effect, a cycle, etc.

**Idea Sketches** Offer the option to “draw” an idea or write a description of it. For example, an idea sketch of truth might show a person upright with rays of light around them (truth). Or the person might be holding a shield to show how truth protects or the person might have wings, lifting him up

**Picture It** Play Virtue “Pictionary” by writing values on cards and then having the group divide into two teams which take turns picking a card. A person takes a card and draws pictures to help team members guess the value. Variation: Play Bible “Pictionary,” drawing a person in the Bible for others to guess.

**DIRECT EXPERIENCE** *Get actively involved in learning about religion and applying it*

**Role Play** Use role playing or skits to illustrate ways ideas from the Word can be put to use in our lives.

**Use Primary Sources** Explore accounts of Swedenborg’s spiritual experiences (also known as Memorable Relations) to learn what they teach us about the spiritual world and a New Church perspective on life.



**Field Trips** Visit other churches when studying other religions, take a “correspondence” nature walk, *etc.*

**Experiments** These can help illustrate natural laws of physics, etc, which can then be applied to spiritual situations we may face.



**Community Service** Involve your teens in identifying and organizing ways to help your local community.

**For Your Life** Set personal goals, work on spiritual tasks, journal, write a prayer, *etc.*

**MULTI-SENSORY EXPERIENCES** *Move around and use multiple senses, where appropriate*

**Five Senses** Be alert for opportunities to bring food, music, and tangible objects that are mentioned in a story or relate to a topic. E.g. “Our daily bread”



**Movement** Role play, dramatization, and discussion techniques where participants take sides or stand on a line according to where they are on “a spectrum” of opinion can help make things more lively.

**Gestures** Charades, sign language, gestures like “thumbs up” as an affirmation can be a fun activity. (Try using charades to guess values or people in the Bible if you haven’t done this with Picture It!)

**GOING DEEPER\*** *Questions and activities drawing on a variety of deeper thinking skills*

<i>Verbs for Each Level of Thinking</i>	<i>Sample Activities</i>
<b>Remember</b> describe, list, recognize, write, sequence	<i>Examples: Food for Thought, Disclosure Game, word association</i>
<b>Understand</b> explain, interpret, predict, infer, illustrate	<i>Examples: What If?, Perspectives, Picture It, mural</i>
<b>Apply</b> categorize, use, experiment, construct, illustrate	<i>Examples: Role play, cartoon, skit, spiritual tasks</i>
<b>Analyze</b> integrate, compare, diagram, contrast	<i>Examples: Venn diagram, word map, idea sketch</i>
<b>Evaluate</b> rate, prioritize, debate, critique, support	<i>Examples: Philosopher’s Chair, Top Ten</i>
<b>Create</b> plan, design, hypothesize, produce, predict	<i>Examples: flyer, poster, mural, rap, collage, play</i>

- based on the revised version of Bloom’s Taxonomy

**Bibliography**

*Ac’cents and Ascendings* by Bob Stanish

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*40 Icebreakers for Small Groups* and *Creative Bible Study Methods for Youth Leaders* – ebooks by Grahame Knox from his blog, *Insight: Reflections and Resources on Christian Youth Ministry and Leadership* at [www.insight.typepad.co.uk](http://www.insight.typepad.co.uk)