

Ideas for Teaching Religion

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In this report, I present several teaching ideas developed for high school religion classes, Grades 9-11. These ideas can be modified to suit other educational levels.

Student Led Class

When introducing a new lesson, rather than standing before your students assigning who reads from the text book, etc., have a student do that task.

Invite a capable student to lead in the reading of the text or in a whole class activity such as the textbook, or worksheet, questions.

Your task as the teacher is to assist the student with disciplinary and other supervisory concerns and serve as an authority for difficult questions.

Advantages

1. Students more readily keep attentive if a student is leading.
2. This gives leadership experience to the chosen student.

Example

One of my students wanted to examine the phrase, "Jesus as God." I used a study sheet from another course listing verses that speak of Jesus as having the same attributes we usually attribute to God. Our student leader guided the looking up and the reading of the relevant texts and then asked for the meaning of the text.

Student Elected Work Groups

For a group of twenty students, choose five capable and energetic students to lead five groups. Give them a class list and send them out of the room to pick "teams."

Advantages

1. Students choose others with whom they can work. All the team feels chosen and works better to get things done.
2. Small groups allow students to socialize and to also get things done. If the teacher is giving information or if a class is discussing, there is more need for quiet and intensive order.

This works well with Bible study sheets and/or worksheets.

Story-telling

Get students to tell a story from their childhood that deals with their thoughts on the topic at hand.

Round table testimony

What have you learned about... dating, faith, prayer, church, a particular news item presented by the teacher, etc.

Include yourself, as the teacher, in the round table. This activity brings wonderful surprises--information about individual students totally unexpected.

Church Board Simulation

The class becomes the church board. The board has issues to solve. To enrich this, work with the pastor on the "agenda." Invite him to lead the class (board) if possible.

Possible agenda items:

- The treasurer's report needs to be approved;
- The young people want to present a church service.
- Some older church members don't want drums in the church.
- Some oppose having a Christmas tree in the church.
- A decision must be made concerning the colour to repaint the children's divisions.
- The church is searching for a new pastor; what qualifications should he or she have?
- A Church member is conducting cultic Bible studies, Branch Davidian style, and inviting other members to attend.
- Two church members have had an affair breaking up two church families. What should the church do to help resolve the crisis?
- A congregation has been meeting in a rented hall and they want to purchase land and build a church.
- The church is planning an Evangelistic series.

For some of these agenda items, background information will need to be constructed.

This assignment introduces the student to the world of local church management.

Doing History Essay

Using the Adventist Archives site, locate a half dozen primary documents relating to an Adventist pioneer. Have the students examine these documents (copies) and then write an essay of their findings.

eg. Alonzo Barry.

Source documents include:

- A picture of Brother Barry
- A copy of his application for sustentation

- A copy of the General Conference committee minutes letting him go
- A copy of the letter by Ellen White advising that Brother Barry be rehired
- A report by Brother Barry of a visit to a church school picnic

The students are to take these documents, study them, and then write an essay about Alonzo Barry. This can include a references section where they give the correct bibliographic style.

Round Table Sentence Reports

Have material you want the students to look over.

Instruct them that after a designated time, you will be asking each person in the class to report one thing they learned. Surprisingly this works really well and I don't have to managing talking out of turn so much. Interest level seems higher as well.

Example One:

I presented a picture of a Roman Catholic Blessed Sacrament procession. I gave each student a copy of the picture and asked them to find one thing in the picture which intrigued them. There were 21 students in this class and each of them came up with a unique point of interest. Because the adoration of the Eucharist is so foreign to their thinking, I had to appeal for respect as we discussed it.

Example Two:

The topic is the Middle Ages. Form History Teams of three or four members each. Choose one of the topics below to investigate. Teams cannot choose the same topic. If another team wants to do the same topic, encourage them to negotiate with each other. Have the teams list their members on the board along with their chosen topic. Teams then go to the computer lab to study their topic for twenty-five minutes. They are to prepare brief two-minute team reports on their chosen topic. As the students give their reports, the teacher briefly adds information to help the student further understand the topic presented by the student.

Suggested topics:

- What is the Roman Catholic view of the Church and its role in salvation?
- What is the Treasury of Merit? OR Purgatory? OR Indulgences? OR Penance?
- Who was Peter Waldo? OR Who were the Waldenses?
- Who was Arnold of Brescia? AND/OR What was the Commune of Rome?
- When and How and by Whom did Islam begin?
- Explain the Five Pillars of Islam.
- What were the Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals?
- How did the Roman Empire come to an end?
- What can you find out about the Germanic tribes?
- What were the Middle Ages or the Medieval Age.
- What was the Investiture Controversy, Or Who was Henry IV.

- What was the Great Schism?
- How did the Feudal System work? (Knights, Lords, Nobles, Vassals, Serfs, etc.)
- What were the Crusades? When, Why and How were they launched? How many were there?