



**jim burns**

general editor

A graphic illustration of a CD-ROM disc with decorative, swirling lines and circular patterns around it, resembling a stylized face or sound waves.

**CD-ROM INCLUDED**

**uncommon  
object lessons and  
discussion  
starters**

leader's  
resource



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# introduction

I hope you will love this book as much as I do! As a youth worker and the general editor of this project, I know how beneficial it is to get students talking and discussing the important issues of their lives. I think you will agree that this book has a little something for everybody when it comes to getting your students to open up and talk.

Edgar Dale, one of the great educators of the last century, informs us that when students are spoken or written to their retention level is only 5 to 10 percent, but when they are active participants in experiential learning, the retention can be expanded to as much as 85 percent. That's why this book is so important. Students learn best when *they talk*, not when *we talk at them*.

Over the years, I've often noticed that the best meetings with the most energy are always the ones with interaction and discussion. Participation seems to be the ingredient for a successful youth meeting. When someone talks at the students, the success of the meeting is dependent on the speaker being dynamic or on the subject hitting the mark. When there is group interaction and discussion, however, the meeting works almost every time.

The good news is that you do not need to be a gifted speaker to affect the learning and spiritual growth of your students. Instead, you can become a good facilitator of communication and interaction among your students. This resource book will show you how. In putting together the material for this book, Mark Simone and I asked youth workers from the front lines to send us their best stuff for getting students to think and talk about the important real-life issues of living out their Christianity. Within these pages you will find object lessons taken directly out of real situations and other types of discussion starters that have already been used successfully with students. You'll be introduced to a wonderful style of teaching and learning that encourages thought-provoking discussions.

Our goal as Christian youth workers and teachers of adolescents is to plant God's Word in students' lives and to help them actively live out their faith. Oftentimes, using the kinds of experiences in this book will do a better and more effective job than any sermon or youth talk. A discussion in which the students discover the truth for themselves with your guidance can be a powerful tool for active learning.

God bless you as you help youth navigate through the not-so-easy world of adolescence. Thanks for being a difference-maker and for being committed to youth.

Jim Burns  
San Juan Capistrano, California



# OBJECT LESSONS

**object lesson** \ ab-jikt le-sen \ **1a:** a concrete illustration of a moral or principle **1b:** a lesson taught by using a material object **2:** something that serves as a practical example of a principle or abstract idea.

Object lessons are great. In my first youth ministry job after I graduated from seminary, I often gave the children's sermon at our church. I would usually use a fun object lesson to bring home a point the children could understand. I was always amazed that after the service many adults would come up to me and comment on the object lesson. I still remember the time one of the older members in our congregation enthusiastically told me, "It finally makes sense. When you brought out the little duckie and explained the Trinity, it finally made sense!" That day, I was reminded that even adults learn best with object lessons—even if you use a little duckie to get the point across. 😊





1

# any light makes a difference

## key verses

“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:14-16).

## materials needed

small flashlight  
large battery-powered lantern  
small penlight or candle for each person  
a few lighters (if you use the candles)  
a box large enough to cover the lantern

## preparation

Gather all of the items together and turn out the lights in the room.

## object lesson

As the group sits in the darkness, explain that in Matthew 5:14-16, Jesus taught that Christians are like lights set on a hill and that the light would be no good if it were hidden. Use the different lights to illustrate the following points about light and Christians as lights in a dark world:

- *One small flashlight:* Even a small light in darkness will make a difference. There is no Christian who is less important or has less to do. All light, no matter the size, will shatter the darkness.
- *The large lantern and the box:* This large lantern will drastically change the darkness. But if you put a box or blanket over it, it cannot be seen. If we hide our light, it will have no effect on the dark world.

- *The penlights (or candles)*: Hand these out to the group but instruct them not to turn them on yet. If you are using penlights, click one on and then walk around the room touching the other penlights. Each time you touch a student's penlight, have him or her click it on. If you use candles, walk around with a lighter and light the candles one at a time. Explain how one light lighting another light brightens the world.

Ask your group how Christians can hide Christ's light. Have students give an example of a Christian they know who shines and gives light to everyone around. Challenge them to think of ways they can be a light in the darkness on their school campus during the next week.

**additional scriptures**

John 1:3-5; 3:19-21; 8:12; 12:46; Acts 13:47; Romans 13:12; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Ephesians 5:8-14; 1 John 2:9-11

