

Learn by Doing

Choice

Big Fish, Small Fish

Ideas can be divided into two kinds: big ideas and smaller ideas. Big ideas give us an overall perspective of what's going on and a framework in which we can understand smaller ideas. (For example, we have a body which serves our spirit; the body contains many organs and each organ has a special function.) The "great sea creatures" God created are like the "big ideas" that give us an overall understanding of a concept. Smaller sea creatures are the details that fill out these ideas and give us a more in-depth understanding of the concept.

Students will identify big and small ideas and discover why both kinds of ideas are important. The Heavenly Doctrine tells us it is impossible for us to properly understand *specific* ideas in the Word unless we first understand the *general* principles that they are part of.

1. Have you heard the story of the blind men and the elephant? (Each blind man feels part of an elephant. They discuss what they feel and disagree on what the animal is like. A sighted man walks by and tells them all are correct!) This story tells us why it is important to have an overall view of something: simply knowing about the parts does not give us the information we need to really understand it!
2. Here is another saying you may have heard that illustrates this idea: "You can't see the forest for the trees."
3. The Heavenly Doctrine teaches that the same principle is true in our spiritual life. Knowing fundamental spiritual ideas is critical to understanding details in the Word.
4. We are going to look at statements on a variety of topics and identify which one is the general, guiding idea and which are smaller, specific ideas that support or increase our understanding of the concept.
5. Divide the class into groups of two or three. Give each group one set of the *Big Fish, Small Fish Cards* (pp. 9-13). Ask students to arrange the cards so the guiding idea is at the top. Once a set is organized, give the group another set. Start with the "natural ideas", then move to the "spiritual ideas".
6. Discuss responses as a group. Repeat.
7. How can knowing about general and specific ideas give us greater understanding of spiritual concepts? Some sentences and stories in the Word do not make sense. If we understand the larger framework they fit in, they are easier to understand properly.

Materials Needed

set of *Big Fish, Small Fish Cards* (pp. 2-6) for every two to three students, scissors or paper cutter

Prepare in Advance

Copy *Big Fish, Small Fish* cards (pp. 2-6) on stiff paper if possible and cut apart. Keep each set of 6 cards separate but shuffle the order of the cards in each set.

New Church Concept Generals & Specifics

While a person is being formed for heaven...the general ideas within his mind are ordered by the Lord so that they correspond to things that are in heaven....The things which are general are first of all ordered in such a way that ideas can be gradually introduced into them by the Lord, and then those that are specific into these.

Unless general ideas are ordered, no order can come to...specific ideas and give light (see *Arcana Coelestia* 3057).

Big Fish, Small Fish Answers

"Big Ideas" are in the top left corner of each set of cards. Keep an original copy to check student answers.

<p>Cars are machines designed to transport people and things from one place to another.</p>	<p>Cars can move quickly or slowly depending on what the driver chooses.</p>	<p>Cars come in many sizes. Some cars can transport many people, some transport only a few.</p>
<p>Cars come in many styles and colors.</p>	<p>Cars are expensive. They require upkeep and maintenance.</p>	<p>Some cars are fueled with gasoline or petrol. Others run on solar power or electricity.</p>

The “Big Ideas” are in the top left corner of each chart.

<p>Computers are machines that process large amounts of information quickly.</p>	<p>Computers make it possible to communicate with people who are far away.</p>	<p>Computers give access to a lot of information.</p>
<p>Computer games can provide hours of entertainment.</p>	<p>Computers allow us to communicate with others without having to go anywhere.</p>	<p>Computer technology provides jobs for many people.</p>

<p>Clothes are made from cloth or other materials. Clothing is shaped to fit the body, and gives protection from sun and cold.</p>	<p>Some uniforms allow us to identify a person's job, e.g. ipolice.</p>	<p>Clothes may be changed to suit the weather.</p>
<p>People wear special clothes for special occasions, e.g. weddings.</p>	<p>Clothes come in many Colors and sizes, allowing us to present ourselves to others in the way we want them to see us.</p>	<p>Clothing tells people around us if we are relaxing, working or attending a special event.</p>

The "Big Ideas" are in the top left corner of each chart.

<p>Music is made up of sounds and silences and communicates ideas and feelings.</p>	<p>Musical rhythms are mathematical divisions of time.</p>	<p>Music engages both the left and right sides of the brain.</p>
<p>Fast music makes you move fast.</p>	<p>Happy music makes you feel good.</p>	<p>People like many different kinds of music.</p>

There is one God who created and sustains the universe. He is all-loving and all-wise.	The Lord wants everyone to go to heaven.	The Lord is never angry with a person.
The Lord was born on earth to redeem and save us.	The Lord leads each person in freedom.	The Lord protects us from hell at every moment.

The “Big Ideas” are in the top left corner of each chart.

The Lord communicates with people through the Word.	Angels are close to us when we read the Word.	The Word expresses true ideas in ways that people can understand them.
Sometimes it is difficult to see the Lord in His Word.	Angels in heaven read the Word.	The Word is written in parables.

<p>Heaven is a state of mind. We experience heaven when we are joined with the Lord by doing His will.</p>	<p>People of all faiths go to heaven after death if they do what their religion teaches.</p>	<p>A person's mind can be in heaven while he or she is living in the world.</p>
<p>There are three heavens: celestial, spiritual and natural.</p>	<p>In heaven a person's surroundings reflect what is happening in his or her mind.</p>	<p>Babies who die go directly to heaven.</p>

The "Big Ideas" are in the top left corner of each chart.

<p>The Lord leads each person by means of His Divine providence.</p>	<p>The Lord leads us in freedom so we can choose good or evil.</p>	<p>Nothing happens by accident.</p>
<p>The Lord does not prevent us from making bad choices.</p>	<p>The Lord wants us to go to heaven, but He does not force us to go there.</p>	<p>Each choice a person makes has a series of consequences to eternity.</p>

<p>Charity is loving others. Genuine charity involves looking to the Lord and not doing evils because they are sins.</p>	<p>Charity is speaking well of others.</p>	<p>Wisely giving money to the poor is one form of charity.</p>
<p>Charity is doing useful services for others.</p>	<p>Charity is doing your work faithfully, honestly and to the best of your ability every day.</p>	<p>Relaxing and doing fun things with others is a form of charity.</p>

The “Big Ideas” are in the top left corner of each chart.

<p>Conjugal love is a marriage between what is truly loving and truly wise in the Lord.</p>	<p>A single person can experience conjugal love.</p>	<p>Conjugal love is experienced deeply in a marriage between one man and one woman.</p>
<p>Conjugal love in marriage is only possible between members of opposite sexes.</p>	<p>Happy marriages continue to eternity.</p>	<p>Angels in heaven are married.</p>