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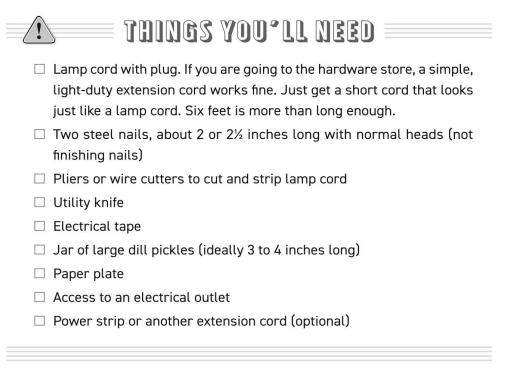
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# Electro-Pickle

THEME: Battle between old and new nature / defeating the old nature



#### **Advance Prep**

Clip the socket (the female end, which is opposite of the end that goes into the wall) off the extension or lamp cord with the pliers or wire cutters. Separate the two wires (one is positive, one is negative) in the cord for a length of six or eight inches. Do this by making a small cut in the plastic housing between the wires and pulling them apart.

Next, strip about one inch of the plastic housing from each of these ends to expose the strands of wire inside. Twist each bundle of wires between your thumb and forefinger like you are winding a toy so the wires form a single strand.

Wrap one twisted wire strand around each nail just below the head, then cover the wire and the nail head completely with electrical tape. The other one to two inches of the nail, including the tip, should be exposed. If you're comfortable soldering, you can solder the wire onto the nail before covering it with electrical tape.

As with every object lesson, you'll want to test this before trying it with the kids.

# KEEP IT SAFE

Here are six quick safety precautions that I really hope I don't need to point out—but probably should just in case.

- 1. Be sure the nails are properly inserted into a pickle *before* plugging the cord into an outlet.
- 2. Don't let the exposed nails contact each other—or any person—while the cord is plugged in.
- 3. Don't do this experiment anywhere around water—like near a sink.
- 4. Don't touch the pickle while you are electrocuting it.
- 5. Never leave the pickle unattended while you're electrocuting it.
- After you're done, don't leave the unplugged cord and nail contraption around for your kids to mess with. Toss the pickle out and pocket the cord.

#### **Electrocuting the Pickle**

- Select a pickle from the jar, blot off some of the juice, and set it on a paper plate.
- Insert one nail into each end of the pickle so the nail tips are aiming toward each other but are NOT touching. The nails should be inserted up to the electrical tape if possible.
- Plug in the lamp cord. If you are using a power strip, plug into the power strip and flip the switch to the "on" position.
- Within seconds you'll likely hear sizzling noises coming from the pickle, and you may start to see some smoke or steam escape from one of the ends. Then you should see a flash of light inside the pickle. Suddenly, you'll have what looks like a fireworks grand finale going on inside the pickle. This will look even better in a darkened room.
- Okay, unplug the pickle—you're ready to teach the lesson!

Now, one other safety note. If you or your spouse has reservations about this one because "it's dangerous," I totally get that. But the key is training. You leave your car keys on the kitchen table and don't worry about the kids taking your car for a joyride, right? It's a matter of training.

This is an important lesson, and rather than miss the truth of it because of the danger of this, do a little extra training with the kids. Explain that you'll electrocute a pickle whenever they want. If they want to show friends, they can just ask you, and you'll do the demo. And if you make them that promise . . . be sure you live up to it. Avoid stalling if they want to see it again.

Remind them that today's demo is dangerous and that you don't want them trying it on their own. You want them to understand that you're trusting them enough to do some pretty cool demos with them, but if they start abusing that, you'll have to go back to Bible picture books.

## **Running the Activity**

Get the kids together and tell them they're going to witness the electrocution of a pickle. Pull out the pickle jar and let them select their victim.

After making sure the cord is unplugged from the power source, insert the nails, being sure the nail tips aren't touching each other. Also be sure to go over the safety rules with the kids. After the pickle is sitting on the plate and you're sure nobody is touching it, plug it in. Dim the lights to add to the effect. You won't want the room completely dark, though, or you may not be able to see the cord to unplug it.

Unplug the cord from the outlet after the pickle has been lit up for no more than ten seconds. The pickle will get hot and may start to burn if you leave it plugged in too long.

#### Teaching the Lesson

It looked like a battle was taking place inside the pickle. Imagine you were somehow transported inside the skin of that pickle while that was going on. That would be a really nasty place to be.

What we saw going on inside the pickle is sort of like a battle that often goes on inside a Christian. Anybody know what I'm talking about?

There is a *negative* influence in all of us, what the Bible calls our "old nature," that wants to live exactly opposite of how a Christian should live. But we also have a *positive* influence—the Holy Spirit—working in us to create a "new nature," to make us more and more like Christ. The light show inside the pickle looked pretty cool, but there is nothing fun about the spiritual battle that goes on inside us.

The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions. (Gal. 5:17 NLT)

The Bible describes part of what our old nature is all about.

When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God. (vv. 19–21 NLT)

- Anybody recognize these battles? Selfishness, anger, arguing, jealousy, lust?
- In a battlefield situation, there are generally casualties. Soldiers get hurt, crippled, or worse. How can losing a battle with the old nature hurt us or change our lives in bad ways?

War is brutal. The enemy wants to kill, destroy, or imprison the opposition. That's what the devil wants to do to us.

God isn't looking to rob us of fun. God gives us the Holy Spirit to rescue us from things that are wrong, from things that can hurt us. He wants to protect us from things that come from our enemy, the devil and his demons. Some of these things can be fun for a time, but they come with a high cost.

Look at the things God wants to give us through the Holy Spirit.

But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things! (vv. 22–23 NLT)

The Holy Spirit wants to change our lives for the better, but if we stay in this area of conflict, we're in a really miserable place. We're consumed and frustrated by things we really want to do but know we shouldn't. Maybe we're racked with guilt about things we've done or are doing, or attitudes we have that we know we shouldn't.

## Summing It Up

Somebody once described the battle inside a Christian as two dogs fighting. The dog we feed is the one that wins.

There is an uncomfortable battle between our old nature and the new work God wants to do in us through his Holy Spirit. But we don't have to stay there.

Ask God to change your heart. As we give him permission to change our hearts, he changes our desires and gives us new ones. Remember what we read in Galatians 5:17: "And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires" (NLT).

Next, let me encourage you to exercise self-control. Sometimes we have to have the strength to say no. That can be really hard, especially if you have the

opportunity to do something that you'd really like to do—even though it is wrong. We need to keep feeding the part of us that wants to do the right thing. Remember, if you give in to your old nature, it will end up destroying you just like we did the pickle. It may not happen as quickly, but it will happen.

Don't be misled—you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always harvest what you plant. Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit. So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up. (6:7–9 NLT)

Is there an area of your life that you need to talk to God about right now? Would you ask him to change your heart? And are you willing to do your part to exercise self-control?