



## What is Head to the Heart?

[http://www.faithink.com/Inkubators/h2h\\_about.asp](http://www.faithink.com/Inkubators/h2h_about.asp)

*"Jesus didn't say 'put down your nets and come to class'." - Rich Melheim*

### **The Goal**

Faith Inkubators' goal with *Head to the Heart* (H2H) is to reach kids and their families for Christ during the rough and rocky teen years. We remain dedicated to finding ways to turn parents into the primary incubators of faith in their kids' lives. The church serves as a reinforcement—not replacement—of the parents' role. *Church* becomes the place that lights a spark to get true *family* ministry started. *Home* to be the place where faith is nurtured.

### **The Philosophy: Teach Better. Keep More Kids. Equip the Parents**

*Head to the Heart* includes over ninety (90) customizable, "back-to-the-basics" themes (lessons) using the Bible as the main textbook. Music, PowerPoint® presentations, art, skits, stories and cartoons are provided as supplements. These resources have been developed and refined for over 15 years (we're not new to the party), using the latest research on teaching how the adolescent brain learns. The resources have been tested in thousands of churches coast to coast. H2H resources equip pastors with presentation tools to engage kids, provide small group leaders with guidance to process the subject in their small groups, and gift families with nightly devotions to explore the topic at home using a simple framework to keep family communication lines open during the crucial teen years.

To a kid, friends are of the utmost importance. *Head to the Heart* harnesses the power of these friendships with small groups building a network of care at church and at home as the context for learning. Small groups learn, serve, and play as they bond together as living cells in the body of Christ. These activities are solidified with simple but effective nightly family devotions—tying what is taught at church with what is talked about at home.

It's hard to make a Biblical case that someone other than a child's parents should be their primary faith mentors, teachers and role models. In *Head to the Heart*, we also head to the *home*. In our model, a good portion of youth ministry is done in the youth's home. Church is simply the place that gets the family started on a theme that continues in a *Nightly Home Huddle™* conversation with kids.

### **The Theology**

The Bible is the only textbook you need for Christian education. That's why each H2H theme is built around one core scripture verse. That verse is introduced in multiple ways during the theme event at church. It is expanded upon and deepened with a dozen other related verses during the *FAITH5 Home Huddles™* that follow. We go from text to context by



introducing the basic Bible theme at church, discussing it within a small group of friends, and then bring it on home where the real faith incubation happens every night.

### **The System and Resources**

*Head to the Heart* provides over 90 lessons of engaging, brain-based teaching materials including object lessons, art, music, game shows, skits, PowerPoint® presentations, beautiful home journals, and more, and wraps it all in a small-group system that surrounds kids with a whole lot of love and care.

### **Blur the Lines Between Church and Home: The H2H Journals**

Small group ministry is a vitally important facet of ministry at church, but what about the most important and influential small groups of all: families?

What if you could plug those small groups into your ministry, too? What would your families look like three years from today if a majority of parents were talking to their kids about God and praying with them every night? What would your church look like three years from today if most of your faith education was happening in homes most nights and most of your youth program was being run off-site by parents who brought God talk into their nightly family conversations? Sounds impossible? It's not.

The *Head to the Heart* journals now offer families a way to equip parents and bring that confirmation faith dialogue into the home. These optional journals are high-quality, theologically sound tool to equip parents (even the most apprehensive ones) for faith talk at home.

### **How Can Head to the Heart Help My Ministry?**

If you're simply looking for new materials, we think that *Head to the Heart* has some of the best materials around. However, the true benefits to your youth, their parents, and your congregation lay in the total H2H system, not in its materials. It is this system that brings life to what has traditionally been one of the most challenging ministries of the church, and equips parents to be active participants in the faith lives of their children.

Whether you choose *Head to the Heart* with or without the *Head to the Heart* journals for your junior high youth ministry program, you will receive the content and the theology crucial to faith formation, taught in engaging and multi-sensory ways designed to make that content stick.



## A Brief History of Head to the Heart

*Head to the Heart* (H2H) started out 1991 as "So, What Does It Mean?," a Lutheran confirmation idea with only a few skits and worksheets. In fact, it wasn't even intended to be a full-blown curriculum—just some fun supplements to the Bible and Small Catechism to get kids engaged. Faith Inkubators' founder Rev. Rich Melheim wrote skits for *Group Publishing* and, along with wet-behind-the-ears Youth Director, Monty Lysne, wanted to find some small ways to get kids at their church fired up (and out of their chairs) in the interpretation of their Bible lessons.

After stirring up some discussion in 1993 with a nationally-published article titled *Conformation (sic!) is Dead*, Rich realized that there was a tremendous desire on the part of many churches to do a better job in keeping kids during and after confirmation. After taking kids back and forth to camp for several years, Monty realized that there was a reason camp rocked and confirmation stunk. So, with the Bible and Luther's Small Catechism as the only textbooks and the understanding that every kid needed to be part of an active small group with a caring adult in the middle of it all, Rich handed the reigns at church to Monty, received a specialized ministry call, and started Faith Inkubators. The goal was to create a system of teaching that would retain the information *and* the kid.

### Confirmation "Lite" (the fluff stuff)

"So, What Does it Mean?" officially launched in 1993 as a research experiment with a few hundred churches on board. At that point, it was strictly a Lutheran-flavored experiment. Several questions became the roadmap for everyone involved:

- How can we retain both the kid and the information?
- How will we educate both head and heart?
- How can we create incubators of faith that include both church and home?
- How can we engage kids in such a way that they take some responsibility for their own Christian education?
- How can we include learning, service and fellowship in a holistic system that keeps the kids wanting to come back for more after confirmation day?

Because this bold new approach was so different from the way confirmation had "always been done," Rich did hear comments for the first few years about being "confirmation lite," though mostly from people who didn't understand that the Bible was the textbook and the actual Faith Inkubators' resources that were the supplement. In more recent years, the label pops up mostly from folks who haven't taken a serious look at *Head to the Heart* lately, who may not have understood the radical goal of capturing both head and heart, or from those folks who don't think learning can (or should) be fun.



The ministry began to grow as people began to increasingly realize that the materials they purchased and the resources they selected were not the entire answer to their post-confirmation, post-high school, mass-exodus problem. The problem was bigger than resources alone could ever solve, because the central issues were two-fold: the methods of teaching and the lack of parental participation in faith dialogue with kids. In other words: a bad system.

Over the next decade, the skits evolved into a full-blown system of thematic lessons, each built around a key passage from Scripture and each supported by an array of supplemental resources that touch all five senses: art, music, home devotions, prayers, poetry, and so forth. Confirmation ministry then grew from a "pied piper & classroom" model into a pastoral care, small group model. This model turned the love of Christ loose in the lives of kids and encouraged higher levels of parental involvement in the process, both at home and at church.

*Head to the Heart* began became more ecumenical, as dozens of churches from other denominations and traditions discovered that H2H was the most effective system yet developed for capturing young minds and hearts and nurturing in them a living faith in Jesus.

Is *Head to the Heart* "there" yet? No. And it never will be, because kids and families will never stop changing. One thing that won't change, however, is the fact that teens and parents will always need Jesus, and Jesus comes most powerfully into the chaos and wonder of this moment of life when he comes in flesh—incarnate—through the love, care, and attention of other caring Christians. Not just through a workbook. Not just through a class or a skit—although all these can be wonderful tools.

Christ becomes flesh, the Word alive, when a parent or other caring adult models Christ's love and translates the Word of God from the lesson into the real life issues of the teens in their care and prayers.

### **In Closing**

If you're simply looking for new materials, H2H has some of the best materials around. But the true benefits to youth, parents, and congregations lay in the total H2H *system*, not in its materials. It is this *system* that brings life to one of the most challenging ministries of the church, and equips parents to be active participants in the faith of their children.

Faith Inkubators believes that *Head to the Heart* is the best whole-brain, engaging, and deep confirmation and junior high youth ministry system on the planet. Over one thousand churches in a dozen different denominations don't just believe it—they know it—because they've seen the results in their own congregations.

You can too.