

# A Quick Launch Introduction to



## The Journey to Adulthood

### **FIVE STEPS**

1. The Curriculum
2. Building a Foundation
3. Discerning Leadership
4. Educating the Community
5. Putting it Together

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## Step 1: The Curriculum

So you've heard great things about the J2A program and you're eager to jump in and get started. You order from the website, but when you get to the download page, you're feeling overwhelmed. This overview might help....

On the website, you'll find several sections on the download page:

### Parts of the Journey to Adulthood Program:

Order	Name	Name Explained	Grades
Part I	R13	Rite-13	Usually 6 <sup>th</sup> & 7 <sup>th</sup> Grades
Part II	J2A	Journey to Adulthood	Usually 8 <sup>th</sup> & 9 <sup>th</sup> Grades
Part III	YAC	Young Adults in Church	Usually 10 <sup>th</sup> & 11 <sup>th</sup> Grades

### What's Included:

- 100-plus "traditional" lesson plans -- divided into three sections: R13, J2A, YAC
- 8 Project Plans spanning several Sundays
- 7 Design suggestions for building customized lesson plans
- 8 Parent meetings
- 6 liturgies + preparation guide
- 1 Coordinator's manual
- 1 Movie discussion guide
- 1 Urban Adventure planning guide
- 1 Pilgrimage Manual
- 1 Community of other J2A users connected in an online network
- Notification of training events around the world
- Electronic Newsletters (4-5 a year) with new updates and ideas from other users
- Suggestions for setting a calendar, establishing group norms and incorporating play
- Theological & developmental underpinnings
- Insights on discerning, recruiting and training adult leaders
- Free phone consultations from professional educators, ready to help

### What makes J2A Unique?

- Takes teens seriously & gives them real work to do
- 6 full years of youth formation
- Touchstone liturgies that act as rites of passage
- Developmentally-sound structure and practices
- Actively teaches 6 skills for adulthood
- Models the deep connections made when we pray
- Includes theological reflection and real-life applications

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## Step 2: Building a Foundation

Before selecting and adopting any program, curriculum, team-building or mission experiences for youth, you should have an answer to this question:

### Why do Youth Ministry at All?

It sounds like a simple question, but your answer, and the answer of your community, absolutely determines both the direction and the success of any programs you attempt.

The answer to this question comes in many forms, some good and some not so good:

- It's our Christian obligation
- We want to keep young families coming to the church
- To keep kids busy and out of trouble
- To keep parents of the teenagers in our church happy/occupied/off our backs
- To pass our faith along to youth
- A young-adult couple showed-up and wants to do something with youth
- To keep up with other churches in our area
- To help build discipleship and service
- To help teenagers understand their value in God's life

*The Journey To Adulthood* contains components that meet each of these desires, sometimes even when they seem to conflict with one another.

But it was designed with one goal in mind:

**To beckon young people into responsible, faithful, adulthood.**

This program runs very deep, and very wide. There are lots of pieces... If you want lesson plans covering a variety of topics and spiritual practices, we've got 'em. Want to build young Christians who know their way around their worship services and the Bible? If you want to do a program of fellowship, games and movie nights, we've got 'em. Service project ideas? Yep. Trip formats? Yep, even including the journey and ancient discipline of Pilgrimage.

Don't let this overwhelm you. Just take it all a little bit at a time. Call us if you need help. Get one or two other people to help you sort through. Bring in one of our trainers, if needed.

You can do this.

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## Step 3: Discerning Leadership

Who will step-up, into this important ministry?

Contrary to popular belief, most congregations have all the people they need to create sacred circles of trust for the teenagers in their care... the church just needs to find them. Sometimes the leaders are obvious, energetic, and actually request to be involved. Other diamonds are still a bit "in the rough." So how can we find the adults who are such a critical piece of this program, to help us lead the youth through this program?

We have several suggestions.

- Take stock of who's already there, all of the time
- Look closely on the fringes for members who cannot attend regularly, but are around
- Look in the choir loft, the altar guild, the men's group, the vestry, and in the nursery
- Ask the young people if there are non-parent adults who engage them at church
- Find an old, and a recent, photo-directory of the congregation. Who's missing?

There are key traits that we believe are essential in adults who work with youth. Once you have a long list of potential candidates in your head (Have you really considered everyone? What about that guy who comes at 8:00 and then leaves?) then begin to think and pray about the following characteristics, and gradually sift through the list:

- 1) Are they kind? Do they have a relaxed demeanor, and a demanding heart?
- 2) Do they maintain their own spiritual and worship activities in the church?
- 3) Do they model a life where God is the major reference point in pain, joy, celebration, and sorrow?
- 4) Will they pray with and for our youth?
- 5) Will they advocate for the youth, and for the program, including being proactive around safety issues, risky behaviors, and basic supervision?
- 6) Do they know how to have fun?
- 7) Are they flexible and loving when it comes to parish life, and all that brings?
- 8) They cannot be related to someone in their group, but could be parents of youth in another group.

We have seen congregations all over the world discern and train adults to be a part of this journey. Most of them will tell you that they were transformed by the circles of youth, the conversations and prayers, and the experience as a whole. **This program is a gift to the adults who lead.** Generating interest in adults happens best during the sermon time, through articles on your website and in the newsletter, and via conversations hosted at times where most adults can participate.

LeaderResources can help you think through how to make these things happen, and find the adults you need to serve as guides on this amazing journey for youth.

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## Step 4: Educating the Community

As the Director of Christian Formation, Sunday School Superintendent, Youth Worker, or even a member of the Clergy – the congregation often places its trust in you when it comes to choosing programs and curriculum for the youth of the congregation. So how can you help them get excited about this wonderful opportunity?

### **Take your time.**

Building awareness and fostering ongoing support for the program takes place in many different ways, and at many different levels in the church. These include the youth, the parents, the congregation, the staff & lay leadership, and the clergy. Each of these have differing needs for information about the program, and different roles around support and participation, and it is essential that you bring them on board carefully, and joyfully.

As is appropriate, you should teach each group about the following:

- The success of J2A - building healthy youth ministry in parishes across the church
- The underlying principles, including:
  1. Gender is a gift from God
  2. Adulthood must be earned
  3. The Six Skills of Adulthood
- How the years together launch the youth into their young adulthood
- How the program is mostly about love

### **We'll say it again: TAKE YOUR TIME!**

The more your congregation, parents, staff, leadership, clergy, and youth know about this program going into it, the better off everyone will be. Expectations are more clearly defined, schedules are in synch, and you have a much better chance of reducing the number of bumps that come along when introducing any new program into the life of the parish.

The more time you spend discerning your purpose as a community of faith, and your responsibility to the youth God has placed in your care, the more successful you will be in implementing this program.

The more time you spend discerning the leadership for the program, prayerfully considering the gifts and skills needed to build relationships that last well into adulthood, the more successful you will be implementing this program.

And finally, the more time you spend educating the parents and congregation about your purpose, what you feel God is calling you to be and to do with these youth, the more successful you will be in implementing this program. Our youth need to see that the church is relevant to them now. The church needs their voices now. Today. Not just at some far-off point in the future when they are "grown-ups."

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## Step 5: Putting it Together

*The Journey to Adulthood (J2A)* program contains... most things necessary for salvation – youth-ministry speaking, of course. With clear goals for your youth program, and a bit of effort, you can plan a calendar with engaging, prayerful work and fun for the youth God has placed in your care.

First, get a copy of your parish or diocesan calendars, so you can plug in any church-wide events. Then, using the table of contents from *the Journey to Adulthood* program, you'll find help with:

- How & When to Introduce the program to the Congregation, Parents, Youth, and Leadership
- Scheduling kick-off events
- Planning Parent meetings for support and engagement
- Training your leaders with background & support materials
- Establishing Group Norms for your youth
- Setting a course for lesson plans throughout the year
- Planning service, learning, worship, & fellowship opportunities throughout the program year(s)
- Inserting appropriate liturgies for youth, provided in the program, where appropriate

This will fortify your ability to put the pieces together in ways that provide a perfect fit for you, your youth, and your congregation.

Soon enough, it will be the first day of your new Journey to Adulthood program. Will it be perfect? No way. Will it be funny, chaotic and deeply holy? Absolutely.

Take a deep breath. Say a quick prayer. And jump. God will be there, just as promised.

Place the youth God has put in your care, along this path.

LeaderResources cares deeply about helping teenagers find their way into responsible, faithful adulthood. We are professional Christian Educators with lots of youth experience and we're here to help.

Feel free to call us with questions.

Check our website for J2A trainings in your area or call us to set up your own event with one of our experienced trainers.

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