

The Seekers, a program for young adults ages 18-22, has five parts:

- Getting Started: three initial sessions
- Sessions on Faith
- Sessions on Life
- Sessions on Self and
- Sessions on Values

The following pages are samples for the Start-up manual and one session from each of the four parts. *The Seekers* has two years of programming, so the same sequence is repeated for the second year. Sessions may be used in any order desired. This program also includes two fall and spring retreats that can be used to launch and close each year.

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About the Authors

The Seekers was developed under the auspices of OACES, Inc., <http://www.oaces.org>.

To the leaders of THE SEEKERS

The authors of *The Seekers* have drawn on our years of experience in the areas of youth ministry and ministry formation with adults to create this resource for leaders in a ministry with young adult Christians. The sessions can be adapted to a variety of settings, such as Sunday morning classes, Canterbury groups on college campuses (the name often used for the Episcopal group at colleges), young adult group meetings, summer camp, and so forth.

The goal of *The Seekers* is to call young people *into adulthood*, rather than *out of childhood*. The outlines help leaders explore with these young men and women, rather than give them answers. The emphasis of *The Seekers* is not doctrinal instruction, Bible teaching, or information giving. Rather, leaders and the young men and women will discover, wonder, and reflect on their lives as Christians in light of our Christian tradition as found in the Bible, the *Book of Common Prayer*, and the community of believers.

The basic premise we have used in designing this program of exploration and discovery for young adults is that we ask them to do only things which we ourselves are willing to do. The operative word in this course is “with”—leaders are seekers with the young adults. That means that all people involved in the sessions and retreats, both young adults and the older adult leaders, do activities together. Since we’re about the business of making it possible for this age group to decide that becoming older adults is worthwhile, one of the best ways is to genuinely and faithfully participate with them.

A ‘rule of thumb’ in creating a good ratio of older and younger adults is to have one older adult leader for every five or six young adults. This is a good ratio for retreats as well as weekly meeting times. With such a ratio, the leaders can participate in small group activities and discussions and serve as facilitators.

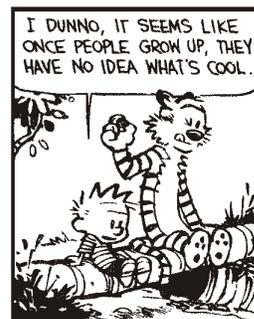
One word about facilitators: there’s an axiom from somewhere that says “the best facilitator is the one whose name you can’t remember later.” Well, maybe—but the point is that a good facilitator is heard from a lot less than the others in the group. For our work in *The Seekers*, that pretty much means to allow and encourage the thoughts of others. The facilitator helps move discussion along, watches time, and stays out of the territory of “when *I* was your age.” The facilitator explores and discovers along with everyone else and is willing to be who he or she is

now—with their own questions, struggles, and hopes. This age group can spot a fake a hundred miles away.

Sometimes adult leaders fall into subtle attempts to control or instruct or even determine outcomes of conversation. *The Seekers* is a ministry of and with young adults not “to” or “at” them. Keep the image of walking beside these people. Serve in the role of mentor.

Openness to self, others, and God will go a long way in this ministry—or any! Laughter, *at* self and *with* others, will, too.

CALVIN AND HOBBS



By Bill Watterson

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Ask questions, seek answers, knock on doors until they open. With these thoughts in mind, go forward with a spirit of adventure and exploration.

The Seekers

Getting Started

TO THE SEEKERS:

The territory of adulthood is where you live: a place to explore and test, to challenge and to meet challenges. The task is huge, but not beyond you. The stakes are high, the risks many, the rewards dependent on your choices. There are so many questions to ask and answer about yourself and who you're becoming. If you're between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five, you've been on this earth long enough to know that there are all kinds of ways to be an adult. You know that things aren't always easy in that place called adulthood.

Part of the decision for you right now is whether it's even worth it to become an adult.

Without a doubt, this process of *The Seekers* hopes to help you answer "Yes" to that decision. But, beyond that— This is a chance for you to create your map of adulthood.

Explorers need certain things, if their journey is to be successful. They need a map of where they're going. They need to know the language or have a guide or interpreter. They need to know something about the place they're heading. They need the best equipment in order to survive and thrive both on the way and when they get there.

This process will give you a beginning map of your adulthood. You will work with some of the language connected with careers, faith and religion, yourself, and your values and choices. You'll learn some things both about where you are now and the adulthood you're entering. You will be encouraged to find guides and interpreters at some points along the way, and you will be given some tools and equipment for the rest of your life.

In all of the process of maturing in your adulthood . . .

Ask—and keep on asking. Ask for the help you need. Ask the questions you have. Ask of God. Ask of yourself. Ask of other adults, those your age and older.

Seek—and keep on seeking. Seek for answers. Seek for information. Seek for direction. Seek at home, in school, in your neighborhoods, your church, your community.

Knock—and keep on knocking. Knock on doors of career possibilities. Knock on doors of relationships. Knock on doors of faith and hope and love.

Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for

you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Matthew 7:7-8

Using the Outlines

The outlines for *The Seekers* may be used in any order, unless two sessions are linked as Part A and Part B.

Each outline is for 45 minutes to one hour—adjust as needed. Use the outlines in any sequence or order that works for the group, the interests, and the time available. Every outline proceeds as follows:

Suggested Opening—will be prayers, scripture, or something related to the outline’s theme. Use other material that may be useful.

Presentation—sets the context or theme of the session; what we’re trying to accomplish. The leader should be able to state the theme in one sentence. Each outline presents the context for the leader to adapt as useful.

Explore—an activity to help the group explore the theme or context. Use the activity suggested in each outline as best suits the group’s circumstance.

Evaluate—a way to discuss each session’s theme and its exploration and to identify “I never knew. . .,” “I learned. . .” .

Closing—a suggested way to close the session accompanies each outline. Adapt, delete, or substitute as needed.

This basic format works well where your program is supposed to last about one to one and a half hours, for example in a Sunday morning class, though you may have to adjust for shorter times.

If you have **2 1/2 to 3 hours** together, such as a Canterbury gathering (the name often used for the Episcopal group at colleges), young adult group meeting, or camp sessions, you can use the same basic outlines and add community building activities and a meal. Keep the food simple. Look for someone with a “food ministry” to young adults. (Such people do exist!) Ask them to organize the eating part of your program so you can focus your energy on the time you have with the group. In a longer meeting setting, the closing can also be expanded to include one of the Daily Offices from *The Book of Common Prayer*.

Overview of *Getting Started*

These three sessions are to be used when the group first begins forming. Regardless of what other sessions you may do with these young men and women, the time you take to discover and encourage the community God places among you and them will be essential. The third session can either be a retreat (see the *Retreat Designs* set of outlines), or a single session meeting of 45 minutes - 2 hours. The single session outline is part of this *Getting Started* set of three outlines.

Discovering Community: Helps the group begin to get to know one another. Provides activities for early learning about others.

Forming Community: Continues with the process of group members getting to know one another and the leader or leaders.

Deepening Community: Begins to move the group towards recognizing the gifts and talents among them.

The Seekers

Getting Started

Discovering Community

Purpose: Begin forming the group.

Materials: Roll of toilet tissue; newsprint or other large writing surface; paper and pencils.

REFLECTION

All who work with young adults have ideas about what we hope will happen with the group and individuals. Somehow we pray that in our work of “equipping the saints,” we will inspire them to develop a personal relationship with Jesus and work together to make a difference in the world around them. All that is possible—but first we have to build up our community of the faithful; more explicitly, we have to discover the community that God places in our midst. And that is our work as mentors before the group members can begin their work. So how do we get started? There are two types of beginnings for any group. The first happens when we gather for the very first time ... at camp, in young adult groups, at Canterbury Clubs (the name often used for the Episcopal group at colleges), or in Sunday School. There is a need to get to know each other as one part of our working well together. The other beginning happens at the start of each session; we have been apart since our last gathering and now have come back together. Both types of beginnings need attention as we plan how to get into the meat of our work together. As each group spends time together, a certain caring should develop. Also, a group hopefully becomes willing to trust and share on a deeper level. In the beginning, the session openings should be non-threatening. Ask light hearted questions that elicit a laugh or a smile. As the group develops, so does the level of intimacy. If you start a session by asking “How is your relationship with God going this week?” you will receive a variety of responses based on where the group is in its formation. In the following pages you will find some ideas for getting started with the group you serve. There are also lots of books out there with additional ideas. Look for ideas which do not involve put-downs of others in the group and that don’t injure people or property in any way.

OPENING

Each time the group gathers, you must find a way to begin. Often in a Christian setting we choose to do that with prayer. For Episcopalians, all you need to do is say, “The Lord be with you...” and you have others’ attention. You might feel like the prayer portion of

the program fits better as part of the closing and that is fine. So that leaves us with a dilemma of how to start; how to get the group's attention and then move into the program. Starters can be simple, but should be thought provoking. Ask a question. Make an open ended statement. Get their attention using one or two prompters like the following:

| | |
|--|--|
| I wish I were... | I wish I were not... |
| I fear most... | I wish I had... |
| The happiest day of my life was... | My favorite place is... |
| My parents should... | I would like to tell my best friend... |
| The hardest thing for me to do is... | What makes me mad is... |
| If I could do anything and no one else would know I would..... | |
| A Christian is a person who... | I go to church |
| because... | |
| My friends go (or don't go) to church because... | |
| My biggest gripe about church is... | My biggest hang up is... |
| I wish that... | To me happiness is... |
| If I could change one thing about myself I would change... | |

CONTEXT/PRESENTATION SUGGESTIONS

Community cannot be “built” with a few exercises or activities, though those can contribute to community formation. Community is best discovered among people. The activities of this and the next two sessions afford ways to discover the community that God places among those who gather.

EXPLORE

The exploration phase should allow you to more fully understand the other people in the group. It is a time for opening up and sharing at a deeper and deeper level. In the beginning the time can be light and playful, but as the group moves on to a more closely knit community, the level of sharing will hopefully change. Some of the group members may never feel comfortable with this degree of intimacy and you need to be aware of their needs and make that okay. Here are some ideas to get you going.

- Ask each person to name one place in the world where he or she would like to go some day.
- Start a roll of toilet tissue around the group with the direction to “take what you need and pass it on.” Do not say any more than that. Keep repeating “take what you need.” After everyone has taken one or more sheets of the tissue, each tells something about themselves for each sheet they tore off—limit to five statements if someone tears off half the roll!
- Distribute paper and pencils so the group members can write their answers to the

following four questions:

_____ gives me great joy
_____ gives my life meaning
I resent _____
I rebel against _____

Get into pairs and share responses. As the mentor, you may want to collect the papers and save them without reading them so that you can do this activity again at the end of the group's year. At that time, you can then hand out this first work and see if there are any changes in their philosophy.

EVALUATE

Everyone says one new thing they learned about someone in the group, and one thing that they had already known.

For the following meeting the group will decide on norms/expectations that will guide them in this time together. Ask everyone to think of what the rules of their lives are: by what rules do others expect them to live?

CLOSE

Say the Lord's Prayer together.

End of sample pages from *Getting Started*.

SAMPLE PAGES FROM

Faith and Religion

Using the Outlines

Overview of *Faith and Religion*

Quest's Questions

How to Identify Spiritual Mentors

Belief and Faith

In God We Trust

God Help Us and How

Knowing Life's Wow!

I Believe, I Don't Believe, I Want to Believe

The Seekers was developed under the auspices of OACES, Inc., <http://www.oaces.org>.

Using the Outlines

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A Suggested Opening—will be prayers, scripture, or something related to the outline’s theme. Use other material that may be useful.

Presentation—sets the context or theme of the lesson; what we’re trying to accomplish. The leader should be able to state the theme in one sentence. Each outline presents the context for the leader to adapt as useful.

Explore the theme—an activity to help the group explore the theme. Use the activity suggested in each outline as best suits the group’s circumstance.

Evaluate—a way to discuss each session’s theme and its exploration and to identify “I never knew. . .,” “I learned. . .,” .

Closing—a suggested way to close the session accompanies each outline. Adapt, delete, or substitute as needed.

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Overview of *Faith and Religion*

Purpose: To explore how we arrive at our beliefs, the concept of faith as a gift, and how we experience and know God.

Quest's Questions—Discover ways to listen for God's wisdom in response to your deep questions.

How to Identify Spiritual Mentors—Learn how to find spiritual mentors.

Belief and Faith—Understand some aspects of and differences/similarities between belief and faith.

In God We Trust—Explore the images of God around us and the sense of God within us.

God Help Us and How—Explore prayer and the Presence of God.

Knowing Life's Wow!—Build on the idea that God creates humankind with responsiveness to God's creativity.

I Believe, I Don't Believe, I Want to Believe—Make an assessment of personal beliefs about God, world and self.

The Seekers

Faith and Religion

Quest's Questions

Purpose: Discover ways to listen for God's wisdom in response to your deep questions.

Materials: Pencils, paper.

Preparation: If possible, read the first chapter of Huston Smith's *The World's Religions*, HarperSanFrancisco, 1991, pages 1-11.

OPENING

Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me. *Revelation 3:20*

CONTEXT/PRESENTATION

What a strange fellowship this is—the God-seekers in every land, lifting their voices in the most disparate ways imaginable to the God of all life. How does it sound from above? Like bedlam, or do the strains blend in strange, ethereal harmony? Does one faith carry the lead, or do the parts share in the counterpoint and antiphony where not in full-throated chorus?

We cannot know. All we can do is try to listen carefully and with full attention to each voice in turn as it addresses the divine. (Huston Smith, *The World's Religions*, HarperSanFrancisco, 1991, page 2)

Thomas Merton says that God speaks to us in three primary ways: in scripture (the Bible and other sacred writings); in our deepest selves (prayer and mediation); and in strangers (those who differ from us). God-seekers search for value, meaning, and purpose by listening for answers to life's basic questions. Each person asks basic questions in specific, personal ways. The purpose of our time together is to state our basic questions as the first step in listening for the wisdom God gives through faith and religion.

A person listens with the expectation of hearing something not previously experienced. Listening seeks increased knowing and awareness. Listening brings sounds from outside

the person into the minds and hearts of the hearer.

EXPLORE

Questions grow out of wonder, interest, need, and passion. Have each person do the following:

- I. Title a sheet of paper with the word “Wonder.”
- II. List five or six things that cause you to wonder. For example, one person might write, “a starlit night,” another—“a newborn baby,” or a third might write “pictures of the earth from space.”
- III. Write a few life-questions that they have. They might write two or three drafts as a way to clarify their thinking. Each identifies which question or questions reflect a search for wisdom, meaning, or purpose.
- IV. Each selects one such question that he or she is willing to discuss with another person. Give time to talk in pairs.

EVALUATE

Discuss: Of the three ways that Thomas Merton says God speaks (that is, in scripture, in your deepest self, or in strangers) which one seems to be the place where you might begin listening for answers? When, where, and how might you begin listening? What do you need from others to begin listening and seeking answers to your questions?

SUGGESTIONS FOR CLOSING

Close with an extemporaneous prayer or one of the following:

For Knowledge of God’s Creation [*Book of Common Prayer*, page 827]

Almighty and everlasting God, you made the universe with all its marvelous order, its atoms, worlds, and galaxies, and the infinite complexity of living creatures: Grant that, as we probe the mysteries of your creation, we may come to know you more truly, and more surely fulfill our role in your eternal purpose; in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

For the Future of the Human Race [*BCP*, page 828]

O God our heavenly Father, you have blessed us and given us dominion over all the earth: Increase our reverence before the mystery of life; and give us new insight into your purposes for the human race, and new wisdom and determination in making provision for its future in accordance with your will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

SAMPLE PAGES FROM

Life and Work

Using the Outlines

Overview of *Life and Work*

The Work of the Child is Play

Career, Life Work, and Money

Gifts, Joys, and Passion

Healthy, Wealthy, and Wise

Here I Am

The Seekers was developed under the auspices of OACES, Inc., <http://www.oaces.org>.

Overview of *Life and Work*

Purpose: The five sessions of this unit help participants consider dimensions of their choices for their life and work in light of their faith.

The Work of the Child is Play—Explore the realm of play as the way into the realm of career and life work.

Career, Lifework, and Money—Discuss personal career interests, life work, and earning money

Gifts, Joys, and Passion—Explore talents, gifts, and enjoyments as the building material for life work.

Healthy, Wealthy, and Wise—Explore the nature of wisdom by considering how people live and make a living.

Here I Am—How each is called by God; our life's work as loving God.

The Work of the Child Is Play

Purpose: Consider that play provides clues for exploring lifework.

Materials: Handouts of “Three Children in a Store.”

Preparation: Read the outline and decide how to adapt the material to your particular situation.

OPENING

Your playfulness brings forth creativity which in turn develops abilities and gifts. Therefore, return to the “playground” where you want to learn new things and discover meaningful and valuable work.

CONTEXT/PRESENTATION SUGGESTIONS

To participate fully in the adult work world you need, among other things, the following:

- an ability to learn new things and to adapt what you know to new situations
- an ability to communicate with other people, especially those who differ from you
- work that you care enough about to engage in doing; work that is valuable and meaningful and that you want to enlarge and to strengthen
- a way to earn money

A person begins the journey to adulthood in infancy. A baby plays with syllables and tones as the first step in learning how to talk. Sounds get extended into words, words into sentences, and sentences communicate thoughts and feeling, desires and hopes to others. Play gives birth to language.

Children invent games to help them image what it means to be an adult. Six, seven, or eight year olds find adult clothes closets a cornucopia to feed imaginary dramas. As they grow older, hobbies, sports, and other organized activities deepen their play into more sustained explorations that frequently develop life-long interests and commitments.

Play is one of the most important and life-giving activities human beings can do. Enjoyable and engaging play helps a person identify basic interests and inclinations. A primary source for discovering a person’s life work is play. This session is given to reflect on our play and look at clues to what each might want to explore as part of his or

her life work.

EXPLORE

Distribute the accompanying story, “Three Children in a Store,” and allow time for it to be read.

Ask:

What do you learn about each child from what they chose to do?

If the activity chosen were to reveal a life long interest, what kind of work might you expect to find each child doing as an adult?

EVALUATE

Discuss:

What you most enjoyed playing when you were little.

What interests you now. What do you most enjoy doing?

CLOSING SUGGESTION

Close with a prayer to thank God for the spirit of play.

SAMPLE PAGES FROM

The Self

Using the Outlines

Overview of *The Self*

The Mystery of Being Human

Who Is Our “Outer Self ”?

Who Is Our “Inner Self ”?

We Are Who We Are to Be, Part One

We Are Who We Are to Be, Part Two

Composing a Self

The Seekers was developed under the auspices of OACES, Inc., <http://www.oaces.org>.

Overview of *The Self*

Purpose: the six outlines guide exercises and discussions that explore dimensions of the meaning of being human; that is, of being created by God and in God's image.

The Mystery of Being Human—work with the two-fold dimension of self: the individual as unique and as part of a larger group; and the two-fold dimension within the self: the self one is on the inside and on the outside.

Who is Our “Outer Self?”—explores the givens and development of the self on the external levels: those attributes that one is born with and self-determine, and how they contribute to one's identity.

Who is Our “Inner Self?”—explores the givens and development of the self on the internal level: those qualities one is born with and self-determine, and how they contribute to one's identity.

We Are Who We Are To Be, Part One and Part Two—explore the self as I both in terms of self-decided attributes such as, dress and hair and in thought

Composing a Self—reflect on how the person is creating self out of the givens and experiences known thus far.

The Mystery of Being Human

Purpose: Explore the wonder and fear of being a person.

Materials helpful: Handout with portion of Psalm 139 and prayer on it; a picture of the earth from outer space; a bowl of fresh fruit such as oranges, apples, bananas.

Preparation before the meeting time: Arrange the room with the Earth picture and bowl of fruit easily visible for all to see. Have copies of the Psalm 139 handout.

OPENING

Psalm 139:13-18 (say as a group)

For it was you [O Lord] who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.

My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed.

How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!

I try to count them—they are more than the sand; I come to the end—I am still with you.

Prayer:

Loving God, in whom we live, and move, and have our being: show us the mystery of being alive. Help us grow in our awareness of your presence around and within us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SAMPLE PAGES FROM

Values and Choices

Using the Outlines

Overview of *Values and Choices*

Personal Favorites and Their Values

Exploring Personal Choices

What Has Gone Before Us?

Temptations and Dilemmas

Life and Death Choices

Learning to Bear the Beams of Love

The Seekers was developed under the auspices of OACES, Inc., <http://www.oaces.org>.

Overview of *Values and Choices*

Purpose: These six outlines guide exercises and discussions that explore how one forms values; how values relate to choices we have and make; how our Christian tradition guides our values and choices. Use them in any sequence, unless marked as Part A and Part B of a title.

Personal Favorites and Their Values—Exploring personal beliefs and their sources; identifying Christian beliefs and comparing with personal beliefs.

Exploring Personal Choices—How those things we have or want contribute to our understanding of what we value.

What Has Gone Before Us?—Learn about the four classical virtues of justice, courage, moderation, and wisdom, along with the Biblical virtues of faith, hope, and love. Discover how these virtues support the basic human need for intimacy.

Temptations and Dilemmas—Help sort out choices with the definitions of ethical temptation and ethical dilemma; friendship, sex, and pressure to conform.

Life and Death Choices—Reflect on the life and death nature of choices. Use the scriptural notion of choosing life or choosing death—*Deut. 30:19*

Learning to Bear the Beams of Love—Gather and sort the work done in the Values and Choices outlines in light of the position that human beings are made to love.

The Seekers Values and Choices

Personal Favorites and Their Values

Purpose: Discover personal values and how we choose these.

Materials: Copies of the Worksheet for each person in the group.

OPENING PRAYER

Say the Nicene Creed together, page 358 of the *Book of Common Prayer*.

CONTEXT/PRESENTATION IDEAS (about 10 minutes)

We began with our creed, a statement of what we as a church believe to be the true and vital core of our faith. *The Articles of Faith* in the back of the Prayer Book tell us that the creeds “ought thoroughly to be received and believed . . .” That tells us fairly clearly what it is that we believe. But what about those other areas of our life where we don’t have such clear instructions? Each of us has a personal set of values that are the core of us as individuals. Understanding what we hold dear is a way to understand more clearly who we are.

✓ (5 minutes) *Instruction:* Think of some of the things you believe are true—about yourself, your church, or your country.

Ex.: my eyes are brown; the sun rises in the East; Christ died and rose again.

Request a few responses from the group.

Now ask: “How do any of us know that these are true?”

Examples: Observation—I can look in the mirror and see the color of my eyes.

Science & observation tell me the sun comes up in the East.

I believe Resurrection because of the authority of Church.

What are some other ways we might know?

Examples: Intuition/emotions—I just feel/think it is so;

Logic—If A, then B...;
My senses—See it, touch it, taste it, hear it, smell it.

EXPLORE (25 minutes)

- ✓ 15 minutes—Distribute Worksheet (see Handout at end of session).
 - Individually write down as many belief statements as possible (at least 20) and where those beliefs come from.
 - Each person identifies his or her top five most important beliefs.

- ✓ 10 minutes—Compare the lists, using small groups if the group is larger than six members.

EVALUATE (10 minutes)

- ✓ In the full group, if you used small groups for the comparing.
 - What did you (re)learn about yourself that is new information for you?
 - What was your most startling discovery?
 - Where is God in all of this?

CLOSING SUGGESTION

Use the following Litany of Belief:

Stand or sit in a circle. Take a moment to settle down and get quiet. The leader says, “I believe...” and one person shares one thing from their work sheet. Then the group says, “Oh Christ, hear us.” Continue this pattern until all have offered at least one belief.

End of Sample Pages for *The Seekers*

**For more information or to order call
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