

Journey to Adulthood Brief Introduction

Gregg Morris, Senior J2A Training Specialist, LeaderResources, © 2010

The Journey to Adulthood Program (J2A)

The Dilemma

- Roughly 80% of youth leave the church after being confirmed
- They “graduate” from church at this point
- Most never return

This pattern has been occurring since the late 1960’s, and is not improving. As a church we tend to despair of the situation and say, “What can be done?” So we repeat what we’ve done before and hope for different results.

A Solution

- The *Journey to Adulthood (J2A)* program was borne out of a local congregation in Durham, NC struggling with this issue
- It has been in existence since 1984
- To date, it is in use in some 1400 congregations across the US and Canada, with 21 diocese holding diocesan licenses

What Makes J2A Work?

Spiritual Formation vs. Information Transfer as a Model for Learning

Spiritual Formation

- Engage the learners in Christian practices
- Have them reflect on their experience and relevant information to create new learning

→ We learn by doing and reflecting on what we’ve done. Learning is *cyclical* and continues to occur at ever-deepening levels. It is highly active and participatory. The focus is on the *process* and integration of learning

Information Transfer

- The teacher has the information/knowledge
- The student does not and needs it
- The teacher’s role is to transfer information to the student
- The student’s role is to absorb the information and retain it

→ We learn by taking in information and storing it. Learning is *linear* and builds on previous learning. It tends to be passive. The focus is on the *product* (competence and mastery)

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The difference between the two is that spiritual formation *forms* Christians, while information transfer *informs* people *about* Christianity. The *Journey to Adulthood* is a program of spiritual formation for young people.

The Two Guiding Principles

Manhood and Womanhood are free gifts from God

Manhood and Womanhood are defined by biological maturity - the capacity for reproduction. When one has this capacity, one is no longer considered a child. As part of our human development, it is God's gift to us to be cherished, not a curse to be managed.

Adulthood must be earned

Just because one has reached manhood or womanhood developmentally does not mean that one is now an adult. Adulthood is a status granted by the community, and is based on the acquisition of the skills necessary to take responsibility for one's life and to contribute to the care of others.

The Four Areas of the Journey to Adulthood Program Materials

With Jesus as our model (Luke 2:52), we seek to examine and strengthen all aspects of our human experience:

- Self (Jesus increased in wisdom)
- Sexuality/Gender (Jesus increased in years)
- Spirituality (Jesus increased in divine favor)
- Society (Jesus increased in human favor)

The Three Phases of the Journey to Adulthood Program

The *Journey to Adulthood* program is divided into three age group components. Each group has at least two primary leaders, preferably both male and female. Each group and their leaders stay together for two years.

Each component celebrates different liturgical "rites of passage" to mark their experience and growth. These liturgies are central to the program and involve congregational participation.

The three groups are:

- ***Rite-13*** - exploring and celebrating God's gift of manhood, womanhood and our place as creative agents with God
- ***J2A*** - exploring and celebrating God's call toward adulthood and skills involved in becoming an adult
- ***YAC*** - exploring and celebrating what it means to be a young adult in the church (YAC) and how to live as a Christian adult in the world