

JOY & ADOLESCENT FAITH & FLOURISHING CURRICULUM SERIES

The Joy & Adolescent Faith and Flourishing Curriculum Series (the “JAFF Curriculum Series”) will be published in conjunction with the Theology of Joy and the Good Life Project (the “Project”) funded by the John Templeton Foundation and supported by the Yale Center for Faith and Culture and Yale Youth Ministry Institute at Yale Divinity School. This curriculum will supplement a three-volume anthology that provides a theoretical understanding of the enhancers and inhibitors to joy that adolescents encounter. More specifically, the anthology discusses the primary enhancers and inhibitors of joy in order to explore how best to nurture the development of practices, attitudes, habits, and virtues that contribute to faith, joy and flourishing during adolescence. Our hypothesis is that our faith has rich theological and spiritual resources that can enhance the prospects for a flourishing life and buffer the sources of adolescent suffering. Thus, in both the anthology and this curriculum, we are committed to resourcing youth ministers with practical suggestions and curricular materials they can adapt and adopt for use in their different contexts.

The goal of the JAFF Curriculum Series is to support the efforts of those who work with high school age adolescents by providing concrete, facilitated sessions that can be implemented in virtually any context. This curriculum series is especially designed for youth ministries and can be used in confirmation classes, weeknight Bible study groups, Sunday schools, and retreats. As you design your lessons, think of concrete ways you can draw on the theological and spiritual resources of the Christian faith to nurture foundations of joy and adolescent flourishing in ministries which work with adolescents. We hope this curriculum not only energizes our adolescents but will help revitalize joy in congregations and those who work with youth.

We hope that pastors, youth ministry leaders, and lay ministers will embrace the curriculum as a resource to equip young people with the foundational practices, attitudes, habits, and virtues necessary for sustaining joyful, flourishing lives. Further, we hope this curriculum will equip young people with resources—including social, psychological, and spiritual resources—that will help them to build resilience to counter joy “inhibitors” or which allow them to find joy in the midst of them.

Preparing to Write: Overview of the Sessions

The intended audience for this curriculum is high school age adolescents. However, no two groups are alike. These sessions, therefore, should be designed to provide flexibility in adapting the session to work within most youth-centered contexts. While this curriculum should be written with youth ministry in mind, we also anticipate the use of this curriculum in juvenile detention centers and behavioral facilities. In order to keep the curriculum flexible and accessible, we limit the time of each session to sixty-minutes and ask that sessions provide variation regarding the need for techno-visual equipment.

The sixty-minute time frame enables sessions to be offered in a variety of ways, including weekly Sunday school class, bible study, a series of weekend retreats, or a course in an extra-church setting. While no topic can be covered with great depth in

sixty-minutes, our hope is that this curriculum will allow youth to delve deeply enough into each topic that they will be able to adequately articulate if they need more concentrated time exploring that specific topic.

Further, within each session, we encourage you to include multiple variations. You can include variations directly with the session under a heading of “variation.” Variations are useful for accommodating the session to those with different access to techno-visual equipment. You may also include a variation that suggests more than the sixty-minute time frame allotted. For example, if the session only includes a couple of video clips to comply with the time frame, you may include under “variation” an entire video that would capture the theme of the section.

Introducing the Sessions

Each curricular topic should have an introduction that provides background information on the enhancer or inhibitor the sessions address. Design this section to provide useful tips and resources the session leader can use as they prepare to teach the lesson. In this section, provide a definition of your enhancer or inhibitor, explain why those who work with youth need to address it, and share how this curriculum plans to address the topic.

Title Page

The first page of every session is an overview that introduces session leaders to goals of the session and ways to prepare themselves to teach the session, as well as the layout of the entire session. The title page provides the fundamentals of what is needed to facilitate the session.

Outline of Sessions

Each session has four basic components—prepare, engage, reflect, and send forth. While the activities within the sessions may change according to the topic, it is essential that each session contain these four elements. These sections help provide consistency across the curriculum. They also ensure that students have an opportunity to engage in prayer, dialogue, interactive activities, and reflection within each session.

GATHER

ENGAGE

REFLECT

SEND FORTH

The “GATHER” portion of the session is a time of orientation. Design this time to prepare and motivate adolescents for active engagement in the session. Consider including innovative ways for session leaders to invite youth into the space. This section could include creative ways to introduce the session, share the scripture, and invite youth to fully participate in the learning community. Include the room set-up, how session leaders should greet youth, whether music should be playing. All of these dynamics can either encourage or discourage youth engagement in the session. The opening contains a prayer, an opportunity for students to greet one another, and a brief introduction of the session topic. Feel free to improvise and be creative during your opening.

- **PRAYER:** We want students to connect with God; however, you can choose to write variations into your instructions to facilitators. For example, one session may instruct the leader to pray; another may ask an adolescent to pray. You may also instruct prayers that align with the content of the lesson plan or a current event.
- **GREETINGS:** The purpose of the greeting is to build community and to acknowledge everyone’s presence. You can suggest students greet each other with a hug, open with an icebreaker, or design a creative activity that encourages youth to greet people they do not typically greet.
- **INTRODUCTION:** Design a one to three-minute introduction to the topic the instructor will be discussing.

The “ENGAGE” portion of the session is a time of equipping. During this time, you have the option of offering session leaders numerous activities, either individualized or group-based, that help connect adolescents with the topic. Each activity should be explained step-by-step. This is not a time for adolescents to simply learn *about* the enhancer or inhibitor but a time for adolescents to participate in concrete activities that may literally enhance joy or help counter inhibitors of joy. In other words, design activities so that youth can practice ways they can engage theologically and practically in order to sustain themselves through times of adversity. Thus, we encourage creative, experiential, interactive activities that invite youth to be open, expressive, and fully engaged.

The “REFLECT” portion of the session is a time of reflection. In this section, youth are invited to slow down and engage in individual or group activities that help them reflect on what they have learned during the session. Reflection raises self-awareness and empowers youth to discern and determine the direction of their lives. Part of the reflection should include discussion about how the practices, virtues, or habits taught during the session might be incorporated into the youth’s lives.

- Numerous activities open the door for reflection. Group reflection may take the form of directed discussions, small group conversations, or class presentations that offer insights for the groups.
- Personal reflection may include journal writing or moments of silence around particular questions related to the session topic.
- You may also decide to take a both/and approach. For example, artistic activities like mural-making, drawing, and poetry allow rich opportunities for personal

reflection. When the results are shared, they invite the group into reflection with one another.

The “SEND FORTH” portion of the session is a time of empowering. Design the send forth to summarize the session and close in prayer. This is an opportunity for session leaders to bless and prophetically send forth youth into the world as empowered to not only experience joy in their own lives but also to enhance joy in the lives of others. Design this section so youth feel empowered to live into and share joyful, flourishing lives with others. Think of ways to remind the youth that they are empowered to be in healthy relationship with themselves, God, others, and the world. Activities may include the leader praying over youth individually, youth-led prayers, a litany reading, or another spiritual practice.

Materials for the Sessions

Each session should include a section where you provide a detailed list of all the materials that the facilitator will need to carry out this session. All handouts should be original (or within the parameters of copyright) and provided with the submission of the curriculum. If you make references to music, books, or websites, be sure to include the entire citation so facilitators know exactly where the referenced materials can be found.

As you design the session, remember that session leaders may be new to the material. As a result, include the meanings of important words and terms that are used in the session plan. These terms may also need to be explained to youth during the session. The whole session, however, should not be focused on explaining terms to youth. Further, feel free to include relevant websites under the section for further study. These websites may provide relevant background information about the content of the session or resources the teacher can use with youth to supplement the session. However, these websites should not be required to conduct the session. All materials to conduct the session should be included in the form of handouts, videos, or other accessible resources. If you include websites in the session plan, please provide a full citation, including the title of website, URL, and the intended use of the website. Overall, we want to be as generous as possible in providing resources that youth ministry leaders, lay ministers, and pastors need to address adolescent suffering and help adolescents sustain joyful, flourishing lives.

Enhancer of Joy

Time:

Lesson developed by:

Tips to Prepare:

Indicate what the facilitator should do in preparation to teach this lesson.

Setting the Atmosphere:

Please describe how the room should be set up when the students enter. For example, should the chairs be in a circle? Do you want music playing? Will you need tables?

Materials Checklist:

Scripture Focus:

Please select one scripture that can help focus the entire session.

Title of Lesson:

Subtitle:

Please provide a phrase that sums up your session:

[Empty light blue box for session summary phrase]

Purpose

This section gives a two to three sentence explanation of the primary goals and aims of the session.

Objectives

This section describes what participants will discuss, explore, or engage during this session.

In this session, youth will

Session at a Glance

Gather (5 minutes)

- Opening Prayer
- Greeting One Another
- Introduction of Session

Engage (30 minutes)

- Activity 1:
- Activity 2:

Reflect (20 minutes)

- Activity 3:
- Activity 4:

Send Forth (5 minutes)

- Sum-It-Up
- Closing Prayer

Further Study

This section should list scriptures or resources that the facilitator can use to better prepare for the session.