

A Faith Journey Retreat

by Carol Duerksen

MATERIALS AND ADVANCE PREPARATION:

- Locate a place for this 24-hour retreat.
- Make arrangements for food, etc.
- Talk with youth about whom they would like to invite to the retreat—adults within your congregation, or other adults whose faith journey they would like to hear about. Come up with a list of adults to invite—approximately the same number of adults as youth. Some suggestions to consider as you come up with your list:
 - Who has had a “up and down” faith journey?
 - Who has had God’s amazing grace very evident in their life?
 - Who is willing to be vulnerable and open in sharing?
 - Who do you not know very well?
- Invite the adults to your retreat, explaining that they will be invited to share personal aspects of their faith journey with the youth.
- Get supplies
 - paper, pens
 - hour glass game timer
 - video “God Grew Tired of Us” and equipment to show it
 - see “optional sessions” for other supplies needed
- Copies of the quote at the end of this session
- Bibles for everyone (tell people to bring their own to the retreat but have extra available.)
- Craft option for final session: Provide options for participants to take home a reminder of the “faith mantra” they chose.

THE RETREAT

WELCOME AND ICE-BREAKERS:

If your group has some favorite fun games, use them as ice-breaker games with the adults, or find some in game books or online. Use the following game as the last one that you play:

- 1 Divide into groups of 8, 10 or 12—mixed adults and youth. (Groups should be an even number.)

- 2 Hand out a piece of paper and pen to each person
- 3 Ask each person to write down four words on the paper. Nouns are best.
- 4 Fold papers and put them in the middle of the group
- 5 Pair up within the groups
- 6 Person A of a pair takes a piece of paper, looks at the words, and gives clues to Person B of the pair so they can guess what the word is. This is timed with the hour glass timer. When B has guessed all four words, they must recite them in order. The first time, Person A can give clues again as needed, but the second time, Person B must recite all four words without clues. Utilize the timer. If they get it done, the paper is “retired.” If not, it goes back into the pile to be drawn another time.

Continue with another pair. The game continues until all papers are retired.

This game may seem easy at first, but it’s amazingly hard to remember the words under pressure.

EARLY SESSION:

Repeat the game above, but this time, the four words that each person writes down should have something to do with their faith journey, and they don’t have to be nouns. They can be descriptive words as well—anything related to their lifelong relationship with God.

Play the game twice, so that each person will have written down 8 words.

INTERMEDIATE SESSIONS:

Invite adults to share their faith journeys, using the words on the papers as part of their storytelling. Depending on the size of your group and time frame, you may want to do this within the smaller groups, and you may need more than one session for this.

After each adult shares, ask each young person to think of one aspect of the adult’s story that they most identify with and to name it.

OPTIONAL SESSIONS:

Use the sessions from ymroadtrip.org called “Faith Journey Road Map” and “Faith Journeys of Four Biblical Women” as part of this retreat.

LATE NIGHT MOVIE:

Watch the video: “God Grew Tired of Us: The Story of the Lost Boys of Sudan”

WRAP UP SESSION:

Hand out the quote from Kyra-lin Hon and ask people to turn to the book of Hebrews.

Read the quote with the group, then ask everyone to read Hebrews 11:1-13, 12:1-14, and 13:1-6 silently.

Discuss:

- 1 How does Hebrews 11:1 tie in with Kyra’s words?
- 2 What are some “by faith” stories that you know personally? How about the ones you heard this weekend?
- 3 Who is in the “great cloud of witnesses” around you? (12:1-2)
- 4 Find a verse in these passages that you could make your personal mantra—your life’s theme. Share it with the group.

Optional: Take time for participants to memorize and/or make something to take home with their verse on it.

Session Reproducibles

FAITH IS...

Faith that quivers during the darkest times is not faith at all but merely something someone has collected when life was comfortable and good. There is no substance or stability in this so-called faith, only shallow words and empty promises to a Lord that was only accepted but never believed in.

So many people dump God by the roadside in harsh times, asking simple-minded questions such as “how can a merciful, loving God make me suffer like this?” Are we arrogant enough to believe that we can understand God? So that when we no longer have an explanation for his actions we automatically assume that Christian faith is illogical and flawed, and therefore God must not exist—or at least is not the God we assumed him to be. That is not faith at all.

Faith is illogical. It is marked by something deeper than thought or philosophy and hence cannot be explained or defined by either. Certainly, there are beliefs and customs to abide by that may shift and change with time and age. But the core faith of it all remains the same. That is what matters.

—Kyra-lin Hon