



Journey in Faith

Companion Handbook

LeaderResources
Evolutionary Resources™ for a changing church



Journey in Faith

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Journey in Faith is based on *LifeCycles*,
a formation program for local baptismal
ministry support teams

August 2007 Revision

Financial and “in kind” support

Roanridge Trust Fund

The Diocese of Los Angeles

The Pastoral Excellence Program

The Role of Companions

A Journey in Faith Companion fills a unique role. A *Journey in Faith* Companion does not lead the group nor is he or she expected to be an expert on the content. A *Journey in Faith* Companion is more like a coach than a small group leader. The Companion's primary skills are as an encourager, enabler and teacher rather than a leader.

An important part of the coaching role is to be knowledgeable about the program and the resources available to the group. The Companion needs to understand the pedagogical principles and processes used in *Journey in Faith*. He or she also needs to have a working knowledge of the subjects covered: Scripture, history (both church and civic), ethics, theology, missiology, liturgics, spirituality, leadership skills, psychology/sociology and systems theory. This does not mean that the Companion needs to be an expert on all or even any of these subjects. But he or she needs to know enough to be able to help the group's members figure out where they can find the answers to their questions and to ensure that the group doesn't go off track in some major way.

The second role of the Companion is to recruit the group's members and handle administrative affairs. Most groups are started by a Companion who must recruit at least six and no more than 12 members to join the program. The Companion serves as the group's contact with LeaderResources. The Companion agrees to adhere to the principles and practices of *Journey in Faith* and is accountable to both the group members and LeaderResources for upholding those principles and practices.

Organizing the Group

Read the *Startup Guide* for ideas on how to approach your congregation. *Journey in Faith* is designed to be done on a congregational level. While you can have a group comprised of members from more than one congregation, the impact on the congregation(s) will be significantly less. *Journey in Faith* encourages people to take what they have learned and experienced into their daily lives – and into their congregation's life. It is extremely difficult to effect change when one is doing it by oneself or with just one or two other people. This leads to people being discouraged. They have a great experience in a small group but find little or not receptivity in their local congregation. Soon the group becomes focused solely on personal growth. Since the goal of *Journey in Faith* is to change congregations as well as individuals, a group comprised of six or eight or ten people from one congregation will be much more successful. This will ultimately support the gifts and ministries of the other members of the congregation as well as the group's members.

Recruit at least six and no more than 12 group members. Invite people to join a process of faith formation. Seek to ensure that the group has a good chance of success by recruiting reasonably

compatible members who are committed to study, prayer, growth and respectful dialogue. If you choose to recruit people who you know are very different or even at odds with each other, please be sure that the group members are aware of this and are committed to working together respectfully. And be sure that you have the skills to help a group that may face disagreements and conflict.

EXPAND THE POSSIBLE GROUP CONFIGURATIONS

While you are recruiting group members look at how your group composition is developing. An ideal group will have a couple of experienced small group members (e.g., EfM grads), two unchurched members (who may be friends of other group members) and several group members with varying degrees of experience with theological education.

This mix of experience will do several things – it ensures that no one person stands out as “different” than the rest, it provides those with more experience to put that experience to use and it puts the entire group into a normal context. In other words, in your daily life you will ordinarily encounter people with a mix of experience in faith formation and theological education. Therefore, it is useful for everyone to learn how to handle that situation – so they can apply what they are learning and experiencing in the group to the rest of their lives. See “Starting Journey in Faith” for more ideas on how a discernment team can recruit group members.

When you talk with potential group members, explain that *Journey in Faith* is a process of Christian formation with spiritual practices and practical skills for Christian living. The group will encourage people to grow – members will discover new ideas, new ways of thinking and will practice new skills and ways of being a Christian. Explain that the group will be a safe place to try out these new ideas and skills but that everyone’s perspective will be respected and everyone can move at their own speed in trying new things. But it is important the group members come into this experience knowing that there are lots of new and sometimes challenging things they will encounter.

Clarify your role immediately – you are an organizer and a coach, not the group’s leader. Explain that the group’s members will share the leadership roles as people are willing and able to do so. Part of the *Journey in Faith* experience is to learn small group leadership skills. These skills can be used at home, at work and in the church and community.

Recruiting Group Members

Notice that we say “recruit” group members. While you can and should make announcements inviting people to join your group, the most effective way to form a group is personal invitation. This does not mean snagging someone in the hall at church. It means making an appointment and going to their home or meeting in some quiet public place to ask them to tell you about their faith and education needs, tell them about the program, say why you would link them to join, and invite them to prayerfully consider it for a week or two before giving you their answer. This method of invitation and discernment instead of program promotion results in a different outcome and level of commitment.

REGISTERING YOUR GROUP'S MEMBERSHIP

Journey in Faith is offered as a congregational membership – which means that your congregation can organize as many groups as you wish for a single annual fee. However, we encourage you to charge each participant a reasonable fee. People value what they pay for. Groups with paying members are more likely to have higher sustained attendance and participation. Work with your clergy, parish leadership, etc. to determine an appropriate fee and to set up a scholarship system for anyone who might not be able to pay some or all of it.

Once you have decided how to pay for the program, go to www.LeaderResources.org and register your congregation as a member. You will need to provide two email addresses: a contact person (usually the Companion or parish clergy) and a generic parish email address that is not likely to change over time (office@yourchurch or whatever your parish secretary or staff, not volunteer, treasurer uses) – for bills and official notices. Once you register, the invoice will be emailed to these two email addresses. If you choose to pay by credit card, the invoice will reflect that. If not, you can use this email to pay your invoice by check. You will receive a login name and password (which you can change later) that will allow you to log in and download the materials you need to start your group. You can also give this login name and password to every group member and encourage them to download their own materials.

Because the materials can be intimidating to some people, it will be helpful to encourage people to print only the first unit (six sessions) and the auxiliary materials (Journal, Scripture list, etc.) rather than the entire Path at once. This will help people “ease into” the program without feeling overwhelmed.

Six group members (in addition to the Companion) is the minimum group size. Eight is an ideal group size, so setting a goal of recruiting at least nine members gives you “wiggle room” should someone drop out part-way through. Recruiting twelve members (the maximum) means you have a much greater chance of keeping a core group from the original group together for subsequent years.

COMPANION HONORARIUMS

Each congregation will need to establish their own norms regarding Companion honorariums. If your Companion is not a salaried staff member, we encourage you to pay the Companion an honorarium of \$500-900 a year. This is not a salary – it is an honorarium in recognition of the Companion's time and effort. The congregation might also pay for the Companion's training with LeaderResources or another Companion training program.

FINDING THE RIGHT SPACE

There are a variety of appropriate places where your group can meet. You might want to scout out a few options and then discuss them with the group members to see what they find comfortable and convenient. You can, of course, meet at the church. If you choose to do so, choose a room that is comfortable – preferably with sofas or other comfortable seating – rather than gathering around a table in a classroom setting. *Journey in Faith* encourages people to share personal insights, talk about their faith and lives and take risks trying out new ideas, ways of praying, skills, etc. This is more likely to happen in a setting that does not remind people of “school.”

You can meet in your home or a group member’s home provided that someone has appropriate space and won’t find this intrusive or burdensome. If you are meeting in a home make sure that there is sufficient privacy so the group can meet without other family members walking by or overhearing the conversation. Also, give consideration to things like allergies (Does the home have plants or animals?) and the need for the homeowner to prepare for the group.

Speak privately to someone who volunteers their home as a possible site and explore all of these issues before the group starts meeting there. Meet in the person’s home so the two of you can look at the room and decide if it is suitable – can you comfortably seat the number of people you have, is sufficiently private (with a door or on another floor from the rest of the household members) and discuss the issue of animals. If there is an animal in the home, ask each group member if they have problems with that. And, in any case, make sure the homeowner has the animal contained in another part of the house so it doesn’t interrupt the gathering. Even much loved animals can take up lots of time and attention from a group, so it is best to keep them elsewhere in the house.

If your group chooses to meet in a home and wants to rotate meeting space, you will need to attend to these issues for each home. In this case, it would probably be best to discuss it with the entire group. It is important that you present the issues as being issues of hospitality and watch carefully to see how people react. People are often reluctant to acknowledge that, for example, they don’t like dogs, when they are in a group. And people in a group setting are also inclined to dismiss concerns like that when they would be more responsive in a one-on-one situation. So your role is to be sensitive to these issues and make sure people are encouraged to be honest about allergies, back problems (that make sitting in the old sofa painful), etc. At some point, point out that this is about the kind of hospitality we are called to practice in our church and homes at all times – you might spend some time talking about what it means to offer hospitality, to truly welcome the other.

You might meet in some other public space. If a restaurant has a private dining room it might be pressed into service as a meeting space. Community centers and even some workplaces have rooms that could be used. The disadvantage to these settings is that you will need to bring all of the materials and then remove them after each meeting. Also, the issue of privacy might apply so make sure you check how easily one can hear what is happening in the room from various points outside of the room. Since these settings often are rather institutional it would be even more important to pay attention to how you set up the room to be welcoming and holy -- which is likely to be a fair amount of work. Nonetheless, it is worth investing that energy if a public meeting space is the best option for your group. An advantage to such a space is that it may feel more comfortable for unchurched people who may be less likely to want to come to a church building.

Finally, make sure you have thought about an alternate meeting space if your primary space is not available one week. And remember to revisit the question of where to meet on an occasional basis. What might work fine when you start up may turn out to be less desirable later. Make sure you give your home hosts a chance to back out gracefully if meeting in their house becomes more burdensome than they anticipated. Check to ensure that people feel comfortable talking about personal matters in that private dining room where they can hear other diners nearby. And even check to see if the seating is comfortable (one of the most common complaints).

FINDING THE RIGHT TIME

Journey in Faith groups need a minimum of 1 ½ hours – most groups will be 2 to 2 ½ hours in length. Generally they meet once a week in the evening (e.g., 7:00 – 9:00pm). Other times to consider are:

- Sunday after church (including a light lunch as the “breaking bread”)
- Sunday before a service (including breakfast)
- Later on Sunday afternoon from 3:00 to 5:30
- Saturday mornings (with breakfast) before the day gets going
- Early mornings (7-9 am) if you can meet near everyone’s workplace
- During the day (if you have a group that doesn’t have weekday work restrictions)

A few groups choose to meet every other week for a longer period of time. While weekly meetings are probably best, bi-weekly meetings work best for those who live far apart and have significant travel times.

In any case, you will need to find a time that everyone can reasonably commit to attending on a regular basis. Talk about planned absences in advance. Sometimes you may want to skip a week – if, for example, many group members will miss the meeting. Other times group members will decide who will call the missing member to help him/her catch up on what happened.

Scheduling may also impact your group composition. In some parts of the country, older adults “go South” for the winter so may take off the winter months of Dec.-Feb. and meet all summer while others may reverse this and take the summer off. Confer with potential group members about their year-round schedule before you set your group’s schedule. And remember – there is nothing that requires you to get it done within any set timeframe. If it takes your group 18 months or 2 years to finish that path, that’s fine. This is a journey – go at your own pace.

STARTING THE GROUP

Once you have recruited and registered members, identified a meeting time and place and distributed the materials, you are ready to begin. Be prepared to lead the first few sessions – inviting a couple of the group members to assist you as you sense they are ready and willing to do so. If you have EfM graduates or others with similar small group experience, you may want to encourage them to volunteer to lead first.

The initial sessions focus on community building....they are deliberately “lighter” to help those who might be overwhelmed by too much information – something you may want to mention if you sense that some people think the initial sessions are too lightweight. Remember that we hope you will have at least a couple of unchurched people in your group – overwhelming them with lots of paper and long readings is not inviting. Encourage your more experienced group members to practice generous hospitality.

Speaking of hospitality: it is important for you to model generous hospitality during these first sessions. This does not mean you have to be extravagant – in fact, we discourage extravagance lest it add a burden to some group members. Rather by “generous hospitality” we mean that we want you to pay attention to the needs of the group members. A monk once related how he set the tables for the upcoming meal – which was a standard simple monastic meal. But he carefully and prayerfully arranged each piece of silverware, each cup and bowl as if it were going to be used by Christ himself. He found and arranged greenery or rocks or twigs from nature into centerpieces that helped viewers appreciate the beauty of God’s creation. He made sure that the chairs and tables were lined up in an orderly fashion and that the rest of the room was neat and orderly. He thought about what a guest would need at each food station – placing serving spoons and other utensils nearby. He placed small signs in appropriate places explaining anything someone might need to know. And all the while he prayed that God would be present to his guests and that they would be open to meeting God in this place.

His task was simple – set the table – but the way he approached the task made all the difference. He made a simple task a holy task by being hospitable. Above all, his concern was for the well being of his guests and especially tended to details that might help them become aware of God’s presence in this place and in their lives. That’s generous hospitality.

Model this for the first couple of sessions and when you first invite someone to volunteer for the role of hospitality leader, tell this story and help the group understand the concept of generous hospitality. Talk about the concept that the “breaking bread” time is not just a “break” but is a time for the group members to practice generous hospitality. The hospitality leader is also responsible for arriving a bit early and making sure the room temperature is proper, the room is neat and orderly, the supplies the group needs are present (which probably just means helping the session leader arrange those supplies) and that any group members special needs are tended to. Generous hospitality is one of the spiritual habits *Journey in Faith* develops in group members – remember to occasionally ask the group to reflect on how they have carried this out into their daily lives. If that’s not happening in a few months, your group may need to become more intentional about how you are practicing generous hospitality. If your group is practicing this regularly and intentionally in your group it should be reflected in group member’s daily lives as well.

As you can see from this discussion, *Journey in Faith* is as much about the practice of being a Christian as it is about acquiring knowledge or even skills. Your role as a Companion is to model these practices, describe them and their value (especially when they are part of a unit’s introductory materials) and occasionally invite the group to reflect on a specific practice...or to point out when you see the group incorporating a practice into their group life or their daily lives. In other words, your role is to help group members become conscious of and intentional about being Christian in all aspects of their lives.

DEALING WITH CHANGES IN SEASONS, SCHEDULES AND PEOPLE

No group is static forever. It is inevitable that some group members will move, quit or even die! It is possible that new group members will join the group. And, of course, schedules will need to be adjusted.

Groups generally take shorter or longer breaks, especially when family holidays or other events “out in the world” will make it difficult for members to attend for several weeks. But most groups, once started, gather again after each holiday and move on into the next unit that lies before them. Groups generally run the school year so taking the summer “off” is quite common.

When a group member leaves, remember to find a way to celebrate their contributions and send them off with your blessing. Again, remember that you are practicing how Christians say “goodbye” so do this with grace and in a way that is affirming for the departing member and the group.

New members may join a group at any time, however, a group member or two will need to help the newcomer “catch up” perhaps by meeting with him/her before and between the first few

sessions. The group will also need to be careful to explain jokes, tell stories and may even choose to repeat certain activities that were formative to help the person become incorporated. Again, paying attention to how you incorporate a new member is a practice that group members will use elsewhere in life.

You may need to set limits as well. While it is possible for a group of seven or eight to incorporate two or three new members gradually over a year, they can not reasonably absorb six or eight new members. Add new members gradually and if the group starts to get above 15 members, divide it into two groups as soon as the next new person shows up.

FOCUS UNITS

You will see several Focus Units that are offered as part of each Path. Your group may or may not use these Focus Units. Some of these units are generic and all of them are self-contained. So, you are also welcome to invite others to participate in these units. Your group might choose to offer the Focus Unit general adult education offering in your congregation (you'll have to adapt them to fit a shorter timeframe or, preferably, plan a short evening series for everyone)¹. This enables your group members to share what they are learning with others and introduce others to the program. It is part of the way the *Journey in Faith* can impact the congregation as a whole.

Your *Journey in Faith* membership allows you to use any of the materials you find in the program in other aspects of congregational life so feel free to "spread them around!" Just remember that you can only use them while your membership is active. So, include that notice in the footers and remind participants that the materials are copyrighted and they shouldn't use them elsewhere. Use this as an opportunity to remind everyone that this is true for almost any thing printed (including music) – church folks are some of the biggest violators of the copyright laws which is both unethical behavior and ends up costing churches huge amounts in lawsuits (and yes, some publishers will sue you – especially music publishers – and the cost can be \$100,000 *per violation* – so five hymns in the Sunday bulletin could cost your church a half million dollars!). Use this as an opportunity to educate people about the need to respect intellectual property rights in many aspects of congregational life. In addition to being illegal, it is also appropriate that we, as Christians, adopts practices that respect the creative efforts of those among us who are able to create music, programs, art, etc.

¹ If you do a special evening series it would be helpful to provide child care for small children and an alternate program for children and youth. LeaderResources has several children's programs that can be led by youth and/or adults – see www.LeaderResources.org for WorkshopCycles, Aslan, Wizards and Catechism Curriculum.

SUPPORTING A GROUP

Once the group is underway, you can help it by periodically naming both good and challenging developments in the way the group goes about its work. The traditional time for doing this is during the sixth session of a unit; however, some situations won't wait until then.

The feedback should, of course, be couched in as positive and hopeful a manner as possible. If one or two people seem to be dominating the conversation meeting after meeting, or taking on a leadership role in such a way that other members are being excluded from leading, name that to the group and you may suggest a way of addressing the issue (if the group can't come up with any ideas on its own). Likewise, if the group is developing grace and patience among its members, that should be named even though there is no "remedy" beyond "more of that!"

ADDRESSING PROBLEMS

If there is a member of the group who consistently creates problems for others, you will need to weigh carefully at what point you should intervene, and what the nature of that intervention should be. There will always be "extra grace required" (EGR) people, and it may strengthen the group if it has to develop the grace muscles with which to embrace such a person and help him or her learn to be less prickly, obstructive, obtuse, or whatever. (See "Promoting Good Listening and Conversation")

The tricky bit is that a problem member, who will neither accept nor address the fact that he or she is causing problems, may kill off a group. Other members may find meetings becoming more tedious than useful, and may find other ways to spend their time. Depending on the nature of the disruption that is taking place, you may be able to rein it in with a private conversation with the EGR person. More extreme situations may require involvement by the congregation's clergy or leadership. The EGR person may need to be asked to withdraw from the group.

In extreme situations (threats, harassment, seductive or suggestive behaviors and so on), you need to promptly name the behavior, explain the way it contravenes the norms of the group (and of the congregation), and ask the disrupting person to leave. In such a case the Companion, which has more of a moral than a legal position in the group, should immediately inform the appropriate people within the congregation's leadership. In certain cases, the civil authorities will also have to be informed.

REVIEWING AND TRANSMITTING

The sixth session of every module is a time for reflecting on what has been learned, and for gathering up lessons and applying them to the future functioning of the group. The Companion, being a little apart from the group's participants, is in a good position to point out both good and challenging developments that group members might not be able to see.

Journey in Faith thrives and grows on the experiences of its participants, and companions can help the group frame contributions they would like to make to the larger *Journey in Faith* community. These may be modifications to the *Journey in Faith* materials, useful new resources, or other discoveries. The Companion can help organize these contributions and deliver them by sending them to staff@LeaderResources.org.

MOVING TO THE NEXT PATH

While groups can start and end at any time, many groups meet during the school year (Sept to June) and take the summer "off." You might also do some of the Focus Units during the summer months. In any case, choose an official "end of the path" time and do a celebration. If someone is leaving the group for any reason, this is a good time to say "goodbye." The end of the path is also the time for you to give a Group Report to LeaderResources and sign up continuing and new group members.

Once the first path is completed there is no *requirement* that the group go to the second path. However, there is a progression from path's one to five. We do *not* recommend skipping from the first path to the path on world religions (currently not completed) as it is developed with the assumption that the group has substantial common experience and education in the Christian faith before looking at other faith groups. However, this design assumes that the group will want to apply what they learn to other faiths. If the group wants to approach other faiths in a more cursory fashion, they can do it earlier in the series. However they may want to return to that unit and repeat it later when they can look seriously at the issues of what we believe and how that compares to and differs from others.

The Journey in Faith is designed to be more of a community to which one commits oneself than a "curriculum" that one completes. The sessions are designed to be repeated – perhaps after the group has done all five paths and several focus units but perhaps just because the group chooses to repeat a session or path. Each session has multiple choices for activities – and, of course, the ongoing development process means that the session itself may have changed by the time you come back to it. But even if it hasn't, there is WAY too much information and too many options to do the first time around. So there is plenty to do that is new – and you will discover that things

will look very different when you return to them at a later time. So, as you make your plans, pay close attention to the needs of the group and not to what the “program” seems to dictate. Use these materials as a library and as a framework that helps your group continue to grow in faith and knowledge of God-in-Christ.

COMPANION PREPARATION

A list of basic Companion skills is included below. In addition to skills you will need to be thoroughly familiar with the *Journey in Faith* materials and process. You will need to develop the following skills through training, in a Companionship relationship with someone and through practice.

- Asking questions (see the appropriate JF materials on this topic) – Companions need re-direct group participants looking for answers by asking questions and/or guide participants in looking at different perspectives, reflecting on their behavior, etc. by asking questions. This skill is best taught by reviewing the types of questions, setting up situations and role playing.
- Encouraging/supporting participants – Companions need to encourage people to explore new things (perspectives, ways of doing things, people, etc.) and be supportive when people are uncomfortable or not ready to do so.
- Helping participants find answers – Companions do not provide the answers but rather help participants find answers. Review the JF materials and together brainstorm the types of questions participants might ask and develop appropriate guidance. Instead of saying “you will find the answer to that here” the Companion asks questions, provides several suggestions (always multiples vs. just one), encourages participants to think through which option might be best, etc. The goal is to help participants gain skills and confidence in finding answers to their questions.
- Modeling and encouraging respect for all – Companions are responsible for setting and maintaining an environment in which participants can safely express divergent views, doubts, concerns, etc, be open and honest about themselves, their faith and their ministry, etc. The Companion needs to establish this environment at the outset and ask participants to commit to maintaining it.
- Setting and maintaining boundaries – the Companion is responsible for ensuring that the group responds appropriately to any boundary violations. This includes people being disrespectful or disparaging of others theology, views, lifestyle, skills, etc, making inappropriate jokes, using inappropriate language, physical interaction, etc. Read “Establishing and Maintaining Boundaries” and discuss it. You might also ask the group to read and discuss the article and commit to these behaviors at the outset when the group is establishing their norms....or at a later point when their norms need to be updated.
- Helping participants apply their learnings to life – Companions help the group be self-reflective, both as a group and as individuals. He/she encourages the group to reflect on how

the group is changing – how are they applying what they are learning about group skills, prayer, ministry, etc.? And he/she encourages individuals to reflect on what they are learning and how they are using what they are gaining in their home, work, church and community life. The goal is to have people “do something” rather than just have this be an interior experience. The Companion needs to constantly encourage the group members to try things by asking them to brainstorm ideas, ask for people to volunteer to try something and then share their experience.

- Helping people enter and leave gracefully – Companions monitor the coming and going of group members and helps the group welcome newcomers and appropriately say “goodbye” to those who are leaving. The Companion can meet with newcomers prior to their first meeting to help them know what to expect. The Companion can also meet with someone who is leaving under adverse conditions to help that person process the experience, find another group, decide not to continue at all, grieve, express anger, etc.
- Understand the pedagogy and purpose of *Journey in Faith* – Companions need to understand how JF is put together and what it is intended to accomplish so he/she can help participants have realistic expectations. For example, highly linear people will probably be very frustrated by the non-linear process and those who like to have a structured program may be frustrated by the options and the fact that different members of the group may be doing different levels of reading (some choosing to read the books as well as the short session readings) or different levels of experience (e.g., EfM grads or others with theological experience are expected to bring that experience into the group with them). Review the JF scope and sequence, the Integral Approach article and look at the sessions to see how they are set up.
- Helping people understand and integrate spiritual practices into their lives – Companions need to understand the concept of spiritual practices and how they are woven into JF so they can point that out to participant. They also need to be able to help participants be accountable to the group for how they are integrating those practices into their daily lives as well as into the congregation’s life. There is a tendency to see spiritual practices as “churchy things” and not realize that they are directly related to how we live and move and have our being in our day to day interactions at home, at work and at play.

Special note to EfM Companions and graduates

Companions who are not EfM grads, read this so you can talk with EfM grads about *Journey in Faith* so they come with appropriate expectations (it's not the same as EfM) and to help them assume an appropriate role in the group.

Journey in Faith is designed to be a place where you can both continue your own formation and help others in their faith journey. We expect that you will use the knowledge and skills you have acquired in EfM. For example, when questions arise, you are likely to know which book of the Bible addresses that issue and can suggest that people look there or you will know how to use a concordance, Bible dictionary, Gospel parallels, etc. and can introduce those resources to people. You are likely to have a better than average idea of the historical progression of events and can help the group develop its timeline. And we hope you have internalized the four approaches so you can ask questions that encourage people to look at things from those perspectives.

That said, we also need to say that *Journey in Faith* is very different from EfM. While it includes theological reflection, it is not centered around theological reflection in the way EfM is. While it studies similar areas (Scripture, theology, history, ethics) it approaches them in a non-linear fashion. *Journey in Faith* is designed to be more experiential than academic – while offering the option of doing more academic work by reading the books or exploring the websites used in developing the short readings. But the heart of *Journey in Faith* is in the activities, the application to life and reflecting on that application. The content provided is key to this – but instead of giving you lots of information, *Journey in Faith* gives you some information and lots of options and encouragement to find more on your own. The reason for this is simple: we want people to develop both the skill and the habits of curiosity, research, evaluation and application.

The goal of *Journey in Faith* is to help participants deepen their faith and apply what they learn to daily life. Life rarely gives us information or skills on a silver platter – it gives us some information and sometimes, in today's world, it gives us way too much information! We need to learn how to find what we need, assess what we find, figure out how to use what we learn and assess whether our application is beneficial or not.

You are likely to find the early unit “simple” in comparison to EfM. This is intentional. Remember that we hope that every group will have two unchurched members – and that some group members will not have the kind of background you have in EfM. So this is an opportunity of practice hospitality. *Journey in Faith* starts slowly to help those people find their way without being intimidated. We encourage you to be patient and sensitive -- and help the group develop a healthy group life. As an EfM grad, you have years of small group experience and will have acquired skills in how to listen, encourage others, be self-expressive, etc. We hope you will model those skills for other and help your Companion encourage others to practice these skills. In other words, we hope you will exercise leadership in this group.

We also encourage you to go beyond the provided reading by doing research on the web (follow some of the links we provide) and by choosing to do some of the additional reading. The recommended reading list includes basic texts and seminary level reading materials in various subject areas. We encourage you to identify your personal learning goals, select reading materials to help you meet those goals and bring what you learn into the group's life. Again, *Journey in Faith* is designed to be like life – in school you study a subject in an intense, focused semester with set readings, tests, papers, etc. In life you learn as you go – reading an article or book, talking with someone, applying what you learn, observing what happened, trying again, etc. No one gives you assigned readings in life and there are no papers and exams. But there are consequences – you either learn how to cook that dish or it is a flop! And you learn from and with others...some who know more than you and some who know less than you. *Journey in Faith* is like life – you take responsibility for your own learning and you share what you learn with others.

The ideal group has one or two EfMers, a couple of unchurched folks and the rest members of your congregation. One goal of *Journey in Faith* is to transform the congregation as well as the members of the group. So, it is best if most of the group members are from the same congregation. A group of 8-10 can have a much greater impact on a congregation than just one or two people who, almost inevitably, can't effect much change by themselves. So, we encourage you to look at how you, as a group, can apply what you are experiencing and learning to life in your congregation in addition to applying it in your personal lives. Again, this is a place where EfMers can provide a leadership role. You are, most likely, already aware of your ministry and of your congregation's mission. This is an opportunity to gently encourage the group to step out and provide leadership.

You will notice some suggestions and questions at the end of sessions and especially at the end of Session Six. We encourage you to come up with your own. Without pushing too hard, they invite the group to consider ways to share what they are learning. Perhaps the group decides to lead an adult education event. Or a couple of members decide to start their committee meetings using the prayer form they experienced. Or part of the group agrees to join forces in addressing a community problem. Obviously you won't do something every session or even every unit. But the hope is that you will consistently nudge yourself and the group to *act* and not just meet and talk! And we hope you will use what you gained in EfM, provide a leadership role and find this experience a new and different way for you to deepen your faith and find support for your ministry.

Finally, we invite you to offer your suggestions and additions. We need more activities (we want the activities to address all of the multiple intelligences). We welcome additional websites, readings or even content (we plan to add "Optional Readings" and "Additional Resources" at the

end of sessions as appropriate). So, we invite you to send your input to:
staff@LeaderResources.org.