

All About Trek and Journey



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All About Trek and Journey

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Introduction

If you're reading this, you probably want a glimpse into the two main curriculum options from 24-7 Ministries™ – Trek® and Journey™. Yet before looking into the details, it's important to have an overview of 24-7 Ministries as a whole.

24-7 Ministries includes Trek and Journey, but is not only Trek and Journey.

If this doesn't make sense to you, we encourage you to pick up Volume 1 of the 24-7 Ministries training series, *Who, Me?: A Normal Person's Guide to Developing a Healthy Youth Ministry*. Read Chapter 4 and watch the corresponding DVD segment.

The model of 24-7 Ministries encompasses four parts – curriculum, connections, dimensions and training. Trek and Journey are, of course, curriculum options. And while they are not the only quality curriculum options on the market, they are options that reach the bar we consider critical for quality curriculum.

If you have taken the time to become familiar with the 24-7 Ministries model, then you know the four characteristics we deem indispensable to youth ministry curriculum. They are the following:

- Quality curriculum must be based in **Scripture**.
- The **gospel** should be central.
- Intentionality and ability to **integrate** the lessons into teenagers' lives is essential
- There should be enough **flexibility** to accommodate timely, topical lessons or situations that may arise within the group, your region or the world.

Trek and Journey are solidly built on all four of these qualities and are excellent curriculum options.

This short booklet will discuss the ins and outs of Trek and Journey as curriculum choices, and also will share some thoughts about youth group formats. Our hope is that your priority is not simply choosing a curriculum and putting it to use, but is first about building a healthy youth ministry. That's what the 24-7 Ministries Training Series is about, and that is the first step in most effectively using the Trek and Journey materials in your ministry.

Leader Training

Leader training comes through a variety of formats. Yet within all the options, one thing is consistent – the need for it.

24-7 Ministries, while encouraging youth leaders to access learning through various publications, periodicals and conferences, does provide training resources for you.

Overall youth ministry training is available in the 24-7 Ministries Training Series, Volumes 1-2. We highly recommend that you work through these training packages. They will benefit you and your ministry, whether you work through them on your own or with a group of people.

These materials provide the avenue for certification as a 24-7 Ministries youth leader:

2 Role Specific Training

Using Trek and/or Journey as a curriculum in your ministry really brings several layers of benefit. By going through *All About Trek and Journey*, you will learn the unique features and benefits. As a result, this will help you in your specific role as a Trek or Journey leader.

4 Scripture Memory

This step is completed when you are able to clearly and adequately communicate the gospel to someone, using Scripture. We suggest learning the Gospel Wheel and associated verses, to be consistent with Awana® clubs leaders in your church, but the model you choose (Gospel Wheel, Bridge, GOSPEL, etc.) is up to you (see *Who, Me?* for information on these).

Upon completion of these four steps, you may receive your Trek or Journey leader role pin.

Each volume of the training also has its own certificate and pin associated with it as well. Earning these pins can show others your commitment to ministry and communicate the value you place on being well-trained.

If you're the leader of your church's ministry, using this certification process can validate and encourage your volunteer leaders in their own development as well!

1 Who, Me?

The first step to become a certified 24-7 Ministries leader is completing Volume 1 of 24-7 Training, entitled *Who, Me?* You may choose to participate in a live 24-7 orientation training event, but completing *Who, Me?* still is the appropriate step for working towards becoming a certified leader and earning a Trek or Journey pin.



3 Learn by Doing

Completion of this step involves participating in at least three youth group meetings. Ideally, this would happen the year prior to your starting as a leader (Hint: As you're recruiting new leaders, ask them to come join you as an observer so they're ready to go the following year).

A Little About Youth Ministry

Trek and Journey are curriculum options. Knowing the components of the curriculum will not necessarily make it obvious what to do when you're in the middle of a group of teenagers who all are looking to you for direction – or, just as likely, when you're in the middle of a group of teenagers, none of whom are looking to you or even at you.

This guide will primarily instruct you on Trek and Journey, but we want you to start out well. So, what do you do? Where do you start? When you walk into your first evening of youth group, exactly what steps should you take to ensure things go as smoothly as possible?

You really need to start working through *Who, Me?: A Normal Person's Guide to Developing a Healthy Youth Ministry*. This is Volume 1 of the 24-7 Ministries Training series. Also consider attending a 24-7 Ministries orientation, offered by your Awana missionary or ministry team. But, in the meantime, we'll spend a little time helping you think through some of those bigger questions.



Youth Group Structure

Formulating a structure for your youth group is going to be a work in progress. You need to try things and decide on a flow that works for your group in your setting.

In general, you will have some version of a large group time and a small group time. Large group is usually for games or other events, announcements, worship and teaching. Small groups are for discussion and relationship building. There are many ways you can use these times.

Here is one example.

Large group starts at 6:15 p.m. Teenagers may arrive any time after 5:45 to hang with their friends or play any of the board or video games that are set up for their use. If you're in or near a gym, having the option to play basketball or volleyball is great too.

At 6:15 the person who leads large group gets up and asks everyone to take a seat. Leaders should sit in and among the group and participate fully. This is a great time for an engaging game and fun announcements. Have someone lead worship, ideally members of the group. Then you or another leader teaches a lesson. Topics are readily available in the Trek and Journey materials. Large group time likely will be 45-60 minutes.

Following the teaching, the large group may break up into small groups. You and the other leaders should think strategically about how to create these groups at the beginning of the year. Affinity? Geography? Year in school? Whether or not they are trying to earn major book awards and college scholarships through Awana? Groups should stay consistent so leaders and students get to know one another, and so students get to know and trust one another in their groups.

Once in your small groups, you should discuss the teaching, review relevant Scripture and build relationships. If your students are working through the Bible Studies, you also need to allow time to hear their Scripture recitation and discuss their progress individually. Small groups often last 30-45 minutes.

Again, there are many scenarios and ways of doing things. Think and pray about the best way to structure your group for maximum impact.

For more on this, see the section called "Planning a Youth Group Meeting."

Are Youth Group and 24-7 Separate?

Though not ideal, it's not unusual for a church to have both a youth group and a 24-7 Ministries (Trek and/or Journey) group. You should be in dialogue with the person responsible for the youth group in an effort to integrate both when possible.

Here is one church's solution, as an example:

This church used to have two separate youth groups – those who did Awana and those who didn't. A new youth pastor came to the church and integrated them.

The pastor uses the Journey Main Study materials as launch points for the weekly lessons, dividing the material (making smaller lessons than the books tend to cover) among those who share teaching responsibilities.

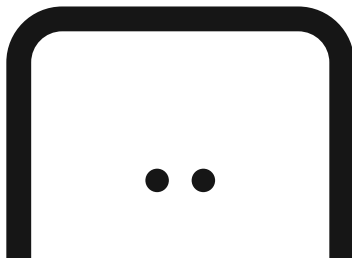
After the lesson, they break up into small groups. The pastor gives small group leaders a list of questions to discuss with their groups about the teaching. Small groups end with time for everyone to memorize Scripture, although recitation is not required.

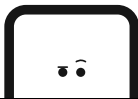
From there, the youth pastor has no involvement with Journey; he focuses on those who choose not to work on the Bible Studies. The teenagers who want to earn the awards are assigned mentors to whom they recite sections and discuss the elective material (because the whole youth group doesn't do the electives) and keep up with their reading and service work. The Journey mentors are responsible for mobilizing teams for AwanaGames™ and Bible Quizzing.

This church maintained a solid youth group and also had 12 teenagers who earned their Citation Award last year.

Continue to have conversations about how to structure your group. Talk with other youth leaders, the youth pastor if you have one, church staff, parents and students. Ask your local Awana missionary or a ministry team member to come talk with you and others.

Youth ministry is exciting and dynamic. Try different things until you find a structure that works and, even then, be willing to change. And remember, above all, it's all about knowing the students and helping them to know God.





Trek

Most youth groups structure their middle-school ministries to reflect their community's school systems. The most common middle-school programs are either 7th and 8th grades or 6th through 8th grades. The process of thinking through this decision is an excellent opportunity to build bridges with the Awana commander or children's pastor in your church. Are the 6th graders in your church fully committed to Awana, or are they starting to drop out? Can you, together, decide on the best strategy to serve kids in these transitional years and keep them fully engaged in the church?

There's no right or wrong way to order the Trek studies. They do not have to be done in any particular order because they are not related to specific grade levels. 24-7 Ministries does recommend a certain book each year (this recommendation can be found in the *Awana Ministry Catalog*), and the reason for this recommendation is twofold:

- 1** 24-7 Ministries is a ministry of Awana, and Awana missionaries host annual, regional Bible Quizzing competitions. These events are a great opportunity to challenge students to greater depth in their knowledge and study of the Word and their books. The quiz questions reflect the year's recommended study. National high-school quizzing takes place at Summit™, our annual youth gathering.
- 2** Many churches worldwide use the Trek material. If a family were to move from one church to another at any point in the student's middle-school career, there is decreased likelihood of missing some material or re-doing some of the same material if each church follows the recommended approach.

The immediate rotation for Trek in the next few years is as follows:

Billboard Series 2009–2010

Roadsign Series 2010–2011

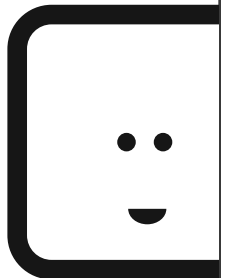
Dashboard Series 2011–2012

Remember, though, these are recommendations. In your ministry, it's up to you to determine which material is best suited for your students for a given period of time.

Trek

is designed for middle-school students.

Trek is a rotating three-year curriculum.



The Series

Each year-based set of items is part of a series. The series, *Billboard*, *Roadsign* and *Dashboard*, are titled to reflect a road trip theme.

Each series contains several items, including the following: *Trek Check*, Bible Studies, Compass Points, *JumpStart* videos, leader guides, certificates and other award items.

The three-year curriculum outline can be referenced online at www.24-7ministries.org.

Trek Check

Trek Check is a booklet designed for each student to work through at the beginning of their first year or, for students who join your ministry during the year, whenever they start. This booklet presents the truths of the gospel so that all students start off hearing it clearly from the beginning. For some, it may be the first time they've heard the truth of the gospel, something we hope they'll hear regularly in your group, and for others it will be a refresher and a reminder of God's saving grace.

It also includes a tear-off travel game, suitable for use on a family road trip or as part of a Trek outing.

The Series

The Bible Study books are actually two books in one. One half of the book contains 12 lessons; then you flip it over for the other 12. The whole book belongs to one series, and each study (half of the book) contains 12 lessons, and each lesson has multiple parts.

Billboard Series

Bible Study One – *In Their Sandals: Lessons About God From Israel's Desert Trek*

Bible Study Two – *FAQs: Your Questions ... the Bible's Answers*

Roadsign Series

Bible Study One – *GPS: God's Positioning System for Your Trek – Exploring the Bible*

Bible Study Two – *Detour: Getting Through Tough Times by Following God and His Word*

Dashboard Series

Bible Study One – *Yield: Responding to God's Faithfulness*

Bible Study Two – *Owner's Manual: Getting Through Tough Times by Following God and His Word*

Twenty-four lessons may not seem like enough, considering the 52 weeks in a year, but there's plenty of material for more than 24 weeks. You will find that you can easily spend two weeks on many of the lessons and we also have found that many youth groups take a break from their regular routine over the summer. So, between extending lessons, summer, holidays and some natural flexibility, this tends to be plenty for the average youth group.

The complete content outline and scope and sequence of each study can be found online at www.24-7ministries.org.

Topical Studies

Beyond the regular Bible Studies, we also provide topical studies which follow the Trek structure and theme, but are shorter and focused on particular topics. These are often used as extra material for Sunday school or small groups, or even to fill extra weeks during the year after you've completed the regular Trek lessons.

Parent's Guides

Scripture is clear that it is primarily a parent's responsibility to shepherd their kids in the faith, and the Parent's Guides help bridge the gap between church and home. Each guide is built to provide parents with the main ideas behind the lessons and questions to help facilitate conversations with their kids.

You could e-mail them to parents after you teach a lesson or drop them in the mail. We suggest getting it directly to the parents rather than giving them to your students.

The Bible Studies

Each lesson is built with several parts:

Guidepost – Scripture memory. The Awana and 24-7 Ministries standard is for leaders to give no more than two helps per Guidepost (not per verse). A help is either a few words or a question or gesture – anything to jog a student's memory.

Backtrack – This asks students to go back to clarify an earlier point or provide their own thoughts about something. You won't see this in every lesson.

Power Up – This is all about application. Really push students to apply their brains here; don't be afraid to ask follow-up questions.

Info-on-the-Go – Definitions for some more obscure words students may not know.

Backpack Stash – Fun stuff!

Trail Sign – Like Backtrack, this one's not in every study. But, when it is, it provides a hint of what's coming in future lessons.

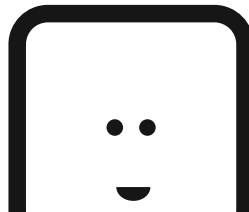
Did You Get It? – A closing question to see if students understand the main points

Take the Trek Challenge – This is an opportunity to dive deeper into a given lesson through additional study or service opportunities. These are optional, much like extra credit projects in school. You'll notice in the first series of each study they're in every lesson; and in the second series, there are only a few, but they're harder. Are your students up for the challenge? You'd be surprised what students are willing and able to do with some strong leadership. Encourage them, and they'll rise to more than you or they think possible! (For some, it's best to do the Trek Challenges as they work through the books, and others prefer to complete the book and then go back to work on them. Encourage your teenagers to find their rhythm and do what works best for them.)

Compass Points

Compass Points correspond directly to each of the Bible Studies, but are designed for the youth group population that's not interested in completing the Bible study books. They're one-page versions of the lessons, meant to be distributed each week and used for discussion. It's not assumed or expected that teenagers using Compass Points will memorize Scripture or complete lessons at home. Therefore, Compass Points do not qualify students for major awards.

But don't get the impression that Compass Points are second rate. They're designed to grab students' attention and challenge their thinking just like the Bible Studies: they just don't require as much effort. Students who use the Compass Points will not benefit from the additional Scripture memory or some of more in-depth questions and challenges that the lessons provide.



They're professionally designed four-color sheets, available from Awana in six-week increments because you can't always gauge the ebb and flow of attendance in your group. You'll receive five copies each of six Compass Points in one package.

The main use for Compass Points is to facilitate conversation in small groups, following a lesson; however, there also is an achievement award for completing all of them. Students who complete all the Compass Points will receive a completion certificate at the end of the year. Make sure you keep extra Compass Points so students can make up any they may have missed.

Leader's Guidebooks

Leader's Guidebooks are available for each of the series to help you prepare for weekly meetings. Leader's Guidebooks walk you through the lessons and show how you can integrate them with your teaching. They're designed to help you lead but are not replacements for your own contributions. Even the best curriculum needs to be personalized for you and your unique group of students; so, fight the temptation to read the lessons verbatim and use the guides word for word.

Leader's Guidebooks include the following:

- 1 Tips for teaching Bible Studies
- 2 Tips for teaching Compass Points
- 3 Ideas for skits, discussions, role plays and games
- 4 Answers to questions
- 5 Requirements

JumpStart DVDs

Each series has its own *JumpStart* DVD. They're comprised of 24 segments – one to introduce the main point of each study. Some are serious, some are silly and some will cause leaders to roll their eyes, but the idea is just that they grab students' attention and serve as discussion starters.

Additional Trek Items

Other items you can purchase from Awana are candy bar wrappers, corkboards and magnets, postcards and much more. See the *Awana Ministry Catalog* for more information about these items.



Journey

The Journey curriculum is designed for a four-year youth ministry program. The components of Journey

Faith's Foundations

are as follows:

The program year is designed to begin with *Faith's Foundations*, a booklet that outlines the basics of salvation and contains some memory work and Bible study. This booklet is required for each student to do at the beginning of each year, and for all students new to your high-school group. Even though some students may

Main Studies and Electives

be believers, it's a good refresher for everyone.

All of the Bible Studies are either Main Studies or Electives. The studies were created with the idea that all Journey groups would do the year's specified Main Study the first half of the year and then an Elective of its choice the second half of the year.

Main studies are the following:

Main Study 1 – A Study in Romans

In Romans, your students will get down to the basics of the Christian life. It addresses topics such as sin, the Law, the righteousness of God, faith and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Main Study 2 – A Study in Galatians and Ephesians

This is a presentation of what the gospel is and what it is not. Students will learn about who they are in Christ, the meaning of grace, living by faith, spiritual gifts and the

victorious life.

Main Study 3 – A Study in 1 Corinthians

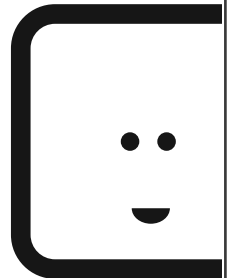
Talk with students about how to live out their faith. The apostle Paul dealt firmly but lovingly with a church that struggled to practice the faith it preached. This will help teenagers take the truths in 1 Corinthians and use them daily. The study includes guidelines on relationships with Christians, nonbelievers, family members and the Lord.

Main Study 4 – On the Rock: Understanding Basic Bible Doctrine

Students can get an in-depth understanding of the Bible and how it all fits together. This study covers Scripture, God, Jesus Christ, angels and Satan, man, salvation, the Church, the future

Journey
is a four-year
rotating curriculum
designed for high-
school students.

JOURNEY™



and the meaning of faith.

Electives:

Faith on Trial

Equip high schoolers to understand and defend their faith. Each chapter contains arguments for and against Christianity with a courtroom theme. Included are chapters on the reliability of the Bible, the existence of God, who Jesus really is, Christianity among other religions and the nature of faith.

First Person

How well do students really know Jesus? This study focuses on Christ, but each lesson also profiles one witness to Jesus' life and contains ways for the reader to apply the lesson to life. *First Person* is a compilation of material from all four gospels.

God-Colored Glasses

How do your high schoolers see the world? Help them see the world as God sees it. *God-Colored Glasses* brings God's perspective into focus. Students will learn what a biblical worldview is, how to get

ultimate victory.

Men and Women of God

The Bible is filled with heroes of the faith. *Men and Women of God* shows us a handful of them doing incredible things for Him. Read about Ruth, Jonah, Abraham, Daniel, Paul and others, with an in-depth look into their lives. Each chapter includes intriguing details, historical and cultural background information, what God teaches through the character and opportunities for further study.

As with Trek, studies are not tied to grade levels and students are not required to complete them in a specified order. 24-7 Ministries does recommend a certain book each year (this recommendation can be found in the *Awana Ministry Catalog*). The reason for this recommendation is twofold:

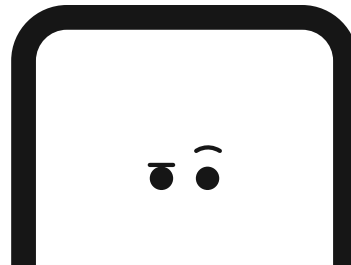
one and how to apply it in real life.

Will of God

Comprised of thoughtful, biblical lessons discussing the Holy Spirit, Scripture, guidance and submission, this book helps answer the common question, "What is God's will for my life?" Other areas are also addressed, such as, choosing friends wisely, work, sexual purity and making plans for the future.

A Study in Revelation

One of the most curious books of the Bible to many: don't miss out on Revelation's teachings. *A Study in Revelation* helps you walk through prophecy, worship, judgment, rewards and



1

24-7 Ministries is a ministry of Awana, and Awana missionaries host annual regional Bible Quizzing competitions. These events are a great opportunity to challenge students to greater depth in their knowledge and study of the Word and their books. The quiz questions are based off the year's recommended study. National high-school quizzing takes place at Summit, our annual youth gathering.

2

Many churches, worldwide, use the Journey material. If a family were to move from one church to another at any point in the student's high-school career, there is decreased likelihood of missing some material or re-doing some of the same material if each church

The immediate rotation is the following:

Main Study 3 – A Study in 1 Corinthians 2009-2010

Main Study 4 – On the Rock: Understanding Basic Bible Doctrine 2010-2011

Main Study 1 – A Study in Romans 2011-2012

Main Study 2 – A Study in Galatians and Ephesians 2012-2013

Remember that while these are recommendations, they are not mandates. In your ministry, it's up to you to determine what material is best suited for your

How are the Bible Studies organized?

The parts of the lessons:

Fill It Up – the memory verse (required in order for a leader to sign that the section is completed). The Awana and 24-7 Ministries standard is for leaders to give no more than two helps per Guidepost (not per verse). A help is either a few words or a question or gesture — anything to jog a student's memory.

Map It Out – definitions of key words

Fast Fact – interesting information

Buckle It In – some extra challenges

On The Street – application

Review It – review to help student hang on to the key points

Parent's Guides

students for a given period of time.

Scripture is clear that it is primarily a parent's responsibility to shepherd their kids in the faith, and Parent's Guides help bridge the gap between church and home. Each guide is built to provide parents with main ideas and questions to engage their kids about specific lessons.

Supply parents with these tools directly. Not that it should be a secret to students that their parents know what they're studying, but it could be awkward to give them to students to give to their parents and, in most

Service and Training

cases, they probably wouldn't end up in parents' hands that way.

An important aspect of students' maturity is serving the Lord. Two areas of service are required for those desiring to complete the Journey curriculum and earn their Citation or other major book award, and they are described at the back of the Main Study books. One area is evangelistic, expressed through bringing friends to church events, and the other is service and training – specifically participating in projects and attending training.

Other requirements for earning the major awards are reading the Bible, bringing a friend to church at least once per year and attending Christian training seminars. Go to the 24-7 Ministries Web site for the Citation Requirements

Awards

Matrix, a chart students can use to track their accomplishments.

Teenagers earn the following awards:

- Timothy Award – for four year's worth of accomplishments
- Meritorious Award – six year's worth of accomplishments
- Citation Award – ten year's worth of accomplishments

If you or your students are unfamiliar with these awards, read more on the Web site. Several Bible colleges award scholarships for students who have earned Citation and Meritorious Awards. Motivated teenagers can earn these major awards by going back and working through some of the materials they missed if they were not in Awana as kids.

Bible Reading

Doing guided Bible Studies is great, but a student who graduates from Journey ought also to have developed a discipline and appreciation for reading the Bible on his or her own. The last pages of the Main Study books provide outlines of the Bible to read during the year and places for leaders to sign and signify that students have been able to summarize the books.

The complete outline of Bible Studies and their topics can be found online at www.24-7ministries.org.

Leader Guides

Each Bible Study has a Leader Guide. It is not required for you to use the guides, but they do provide some solid direction. In each lesson you will be given the goals, lesson outline, ideas for preparation, teaching suggestions, ways to discuss application and answers to the **REVIEW IT** sections.

Trek and Journey Information

Awards

As a ministry of Awana, 24-7 Ministries is part of one of the nation's premier discipleship recognition programs – the Awana Awards System.

The ultimate achievement in Awana/24-7 is the Citation Award, earned as the result of 10 years' worth of work, including all of the books from Truth and Training® (T&T™), the 3rd- through 6th-grade club, through Journey. Citation Award achievers receive the award itself, have their names inscribed on plaques at Awana headquarters and are eligible for numerous Bible college scholarships.





The major book awards 7th- and 8th-grade students can achieve are the Trek Milestone Award and the Meritorious Award.

Students earn the Trek Milestone Award by completing two Trek Bible Studies (one entire book) in one year. The Meritorious Award is for completing six total books. Students who have been diligently working on handbooks throughout T&T can earn this award by the end of eighth grade.



Sixth-graders may receive different awards based on whether or not they've been involved in Awana before their middle-school years. A student who has completed three T&T books and comes to Trek as a 6th-grader will receive his Timothy award after completing a year of Trek Bible Studies, and then go on to earn the Milestone Award the following year. But a student with no prior Awana experience will earn his First Book Award after completing a year of Trek Bible Studies.

It's never too late for students to work on achieving a Citation Award if they have the desire and the drive. You can coach students to complete T&T books, thereby earning the Alpha Award (for one book), Excellence Award (two books), Challenge Award (three books) and the Timothy Award (four books).

Once students start Journey they no longer earn a major book award every year, but they will receive a pin and certificate each year. They must complete all four years' worth of work, after also completing the six years' worth prior, to earn the Citation achievement. As a leader, you can inspire your students to this goal. (You can even earn a Citation Award yourself for doing the work; check out the Parent Book Series in the *Awana Ministry Catalog* that you can do in place of the kids' T&T books.)

Award	Achievement	Notes
	Completion of two third-12th grade club or program requirements. Student must have completed fourth grade.	A trophy and pin presented at the year-end ceremony.
	Completion of three third-12th grade club or program requirements. Student must have completed fifth grade.	A plaque presented at the year-end ceremony.
	Completion of four third-12th grade club or program requirements. Student must have completed sixth grade.	Presented at the year-end ceremony.
Sixth-graders with no prior Awana experience earn a First Book Award on completion of a year of Trek Bible Studies.		
	Completion of two <i>Trek Bible Studies</i> in one year. Student must have completed seventh grade.	Presented at the year-end ceremony.

Awards chart continued...

Award	Achievement	Notes
 <p>Meritorious Award</p>	Completion of six third-12th grade club or program requirements. Student must have completed eighth grade.	Presented at the year-end ceremony.
 <p>Citation Award</p>	Completion of ten third-12th grade club or program requirements. Student must have completed 12th grade.	A plaque presented at the year-end ceremony.

Dimensions

Beyond curriculum, 24-7 Ministries also provides a variety of programs to engage students based on their unique passions, interests, and giftedness – their “dimensions of life”. For various programs and resources dealing with leadership, creative arts, sports, missions, and others, visit the 24-7 Ministries’ Web site at www.24-7ministries.org.

Planning a Youth Group Meeting

Trek and Journey can refer solely to curriculum that you use within your youth group, or they can be the groups.

We hesitate to suggest how, exactly, you should structure your youth meetings; we really think you will know best. That said, if you’re a first-time leader or doubt your own creative energy, we can make a few suggestions.

The three indispensable program elements are fun, Bible teaching and conversation. As long as your meetings contain, on average, a healthy dose of each of these, you’re probably on the right track. (Each meeting doesn’t have to have all three, but a balance over the weeks is important.)

For groups that combine middle- and high-school students: You have an extra burden to think through ideas that will or won’t go over well with all ages.

You have to discern – “will this work for 11- and 17-year-olds?” This is true of all segments. Hopefully, at the very least, you can have discussion groups that are age-based. Age does not dictate maturity, but you are more likely to be able to direct conversations that are appropriate for everyone when students are in the same grades.

Fun

Fun is a simple word and, in fact, a little too simple for youth group planning. What we really mean by this is that you need to have something that’s engaging and captures students’ energy. In many cases, this will be something a teenager will later describe as “so fun,” but not always. It might be games or retreats, but also might be service projects or videos that tug at students’ imaginations and hearts.

This really requires that you know your youth and what they consider engaging. This is a great place to pull in some core student involvement – ask students to suggest, and even plan, events for the group.

You also can scatter fun elements throughout each meeting and have threads that run throughout your year, such as, contests or mini-awards for certain achievements (a candy bar for bringing a friend, etc.).

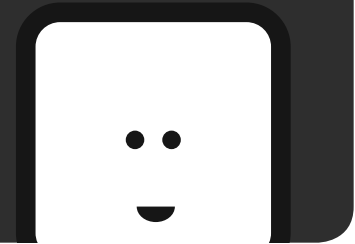
Every once in a while it’s great to plan some significant social-based event. Ski weekends, lock-ins, week-long service projects away from home and retreats are a few ideas. Of course, a lot more can happen during these experiences than just having fun, but students typically view them as exciting highlights. They can create not only the most lasting memories, but also give you opportunities to do the next two items (teaching and conversation) at a level you cannot achieve during a two-hour time at church.

For any events you plan away from the church building, or any overnight events, be sure you are following your church’s child protection and safety standards!

Bible Teaching

Teaching should be an integral part of your gathering. People of all ages should be challenged to know and consider the Word of God. Many people have been gifted to teach others – to communicate truths from the Bible that the majority of people, on their own, would not know or discern. Teaching will challenge students to grapple with Scripture and its implications.

How do you know what to teach? It depends. If all your students are working through the Trek or Journey studies, they are going at different paces. Even so, you can track with the lessons provided and at least know that students have or will have studied it for themselves. You may decide that you need to do a topical series, even as students are working through their materials. Or your church may provide topics if there's an emphasis on coordinating teaching in all age groups in the church.



Conversations and Small Group Meetings

A large group talk is one way for Bible teaching to happen, and working through the Trek and/or Journey Bible Studies is another way.

Either way, for teaching to make a difference in peoples' lives, they have to grapple with the lessons. The best way to do this is to gather students into small groups and talk about the lessons. Talk about whether students buy into them and what they mean for every day life. It's been said that teenagers learn more through the relationships they have with their leaders than they do through the books alone – this very aspect of conversation speaks exactly to that point.

Some sample meetings

Sample Trek/Journey program at a church, which has a separate all-youth group

4:45 – 5:00 Students come in and gather for prayer and a meal prepared by leaders

5:00 – 6:00 Eating and discussion time, based on progression through the Trek and Journey studies (separate groups)

6:00 Awana starts and most of the teenagers head to club, to help in various capacities

Sample middle-school Saturday morning program

8:45 – 9:00 Activity free time (foosball, basketball, crafts, video games, conversation corners, etc.)

9:00 – 9:45 Large group teaching using the Compass Point/Bible Study lesson, including singing, silly skits and videos, games and a Bible lesson

9:45 – 10:30 Small groups that include discussion about the Bible teaching, prayer and time to sign off on sections in the Bible Studies (for students that are working on them)

Outside activities are conducted almost exclusively by small group leaders, except for one all-ministry winter retreat and a spring service project.

Sample high-school program

6:00 – 7:00 Large group, including singing led by students, creative arts presentations by students related to the lesson, offering, and teaching by the youth pastor

7:00 – 8:00 Small group discussions with separate groups for those who are working through Journey curriculum and those who aren't

8:00 – 8:30 AwanaGames for those who are interested

Once a month, a Friday hang-out night at the church with food and a movie or a local band.

Sample high-school program

6:30 – 7:00 Activities (games, food, etc.)

7:00 – 7:30 Large group, including singing, announcements and awards

7:30 – 8:00 Small group time, for discussion and book work

Engaging Parents

As the youth in our churches get older, it gets harder to engage their parents. Parents don't necessarily accompany their teenagers – even 11- or 12-year-olds – into the church or to your doors. Many middle-school and high-school students are making efforts to exercise their freedom to act apart from mom and dad too. But they're still critically important – to your teenagers and, therefore, to you.

An easy way to involve parents is to ask them for help with activities and events; however, your main goal is not to execute activities, but involve parents and get to know them. Involvement is just a first step. Beyond this, encourage them to know what their kids are studying, ask them about their teenagers' spiritual development and pray with parents for and about their kids

Beyond the Trek and Journey materials for students, we strongly recommend providing parents with materials to "take those lessons home." 24-7 Ministries' *Parent's Guides* are designed to accomplish just that. Connecting directly to the weekly lessons found in Trek and Journey, *Parent's Guides* help build a bridge between you and parents, and parents and their kids. These are great resources to e-mail to parents, and this format also is a nice way to casually touch base with parents on a regular basis.

More Resources and Information

This booklet is designed to provide a simple overview and suggestions for use of the Trek and Journey materials. While certainly not all-inclusive, we hope it has provided a primer for you to begin to use these materials in your ministry. Remember to dig deeper into the complete 24-7 Training library for help in building your overall ministry. If you have specific questions they are probably addressed there. Also be sure to visit the 24-7 Web site for additional tools and resources and to view our complete product catalog – www.24-7ministries.org. Also, utilize the expertise of your local Awana missionary and his or her ministry team. You can find their contact information on the Awana Web site at www.awana.org.

