



Youth Curriculum for Lent-Easter

Introduction to the Curriculum

Written by Rev. Anna Strickland

About the Curriculum

This engaging youth curriculum contains 8 weeks of lessons (for each Sunday in Lent through the Second Sunday of Easter) that follow Simon Peter's journey with Jesus. The lessons include a variety of ways for youth (approximately ages 12-18) to connect the *Wandering Heart* themes and gospel stories to their own faith journeys. While geared toward middle and high school students, the curriculum can also be easily adapted for college students and adults.

We have included the following elements in this weekly curriculum. You are welcome to adapt and order these elements to best suit your context—for use in Sunday School, youth group, or take-home kits.

Scripture Retelling

Read the listed scripture together aloud, using whatever translation you prefer. You might choose to engage the practice of *lectio divina*, which involves reading the scripture multiple times with silence in between to allow God's voice to bubble up through the text. Alternatively, you might read several translations, noting the differences between them.

Discussion

After reading scripture together, use the included reflection prompts as a guide to lead youth in discussion. Resist the temptation to answer students' questions simply and quickly. Instead, follow the example of Jesus who frequently answered questions with more questions. Ask, "What do *you* think?" Spend as much or as little time as needed on the reflection prompts, letting go of any pressure to cover each prompt or spend an allotted amount of time on discussion before moving on. Let youth meander from the prompts as long as the conversation remains fruitful.

Multimedia Journaling Prompts

Each week, we have included a variety of prompts for youth to choose from during a time of independent journaling. As this element is a central part of the curriculum, we recommend providing each youth with a blank notebook or sketchbook for the series, such as [these customized notebooks](#)¹ matching the theme branding. Another option is to print the weekly curriculum and bind it with several blank pages in between each week. Commercial printing services such as Staples can ring, comb, or fabric bind such custom journals.

¹ Order customized journals for the theme here: sanctifiedart.org/special-products/wandering-heart-notebook

About the Curriculum *(continued)*

Multimedia Journaling Prompts *(continued)*

The journaling prompts can be completed with just a few basic supplies which remain the same from week to week. You can keep the supplies in one large container to be communally shared, or you can compile small kits for each student. Materials are listed below — you might preview the journaling prompts to see how the supplies will be used each week.

Several journaling prompts invite youth to take a photo. This can be done with a cell phone camera, but we encourage you to provide a physical camera, even if it's just a disposable camera. Polaroid or Instax cameras are especially good for this curriculum, as they allow youth to tape the photos they take into their journals immediately.

Several journaling prompts invite youth to begin by listening to a song. While these songs are available on streaming apps such as Spotify and YouTube for youth to pull up on their cell phones, be sure that an adult leader also has the capability to play the listed song each week. You might choose to go “old school” by purchasing the songs and burning them onto a CD, setting up a listening station with a CD player and headphones for youth to visit any time during the journaling period, or you might play the song to open up journaling time. The songs used throughout the curriculum are:

- “Reckless Love” by Cory Asbury
- “Oh How I Need You” by All Sons & Daughters
- “Beautiful Things” by Gungor
- “Unconditional” by Rend Collective

As youth's journals begin to take shape, you might consider ways to share their creations with the wider church. With students' permission, you could take photos of the journaling pages and share them on your church's social media. Be mindful that some of these journal entries may be too sensitive to share publicly. You might also include the prompts wherever students' creations are shared to invite others to engage in the journaling themselves.

Materials

- A blank journal (*unlined pages preferred*) or plain copy paper for each youth.² (*If providing loose paper, be sure to also provide hard writing surfaces such as tables, lap desks, or large books. If providing watercolors, choose blank sketchbooks designed for wet media or provide some watercolor paper.*)
- Pens and/or pencils.
- Assorted art supplies (*Relatively mess-free options include: colored pencils, watercolors, artist pens, charcoal pencils, oil pastels, illustration markers, etc.*)
- Old magazines and catalogs.
- Scissors.
- Tape (*such as washi tape*) and/or glue sticks.
- Devices and speakers to play songs (*see above*).
- A camera, particularly a Polaroid or Instax camera if one is available to you (*see above*).

² Order customized journals for the theme here: sanctifiedart.org/special-products/wandering-heart-notebook

About the Curriculum *(continued)*

Materials *(continued)*

- *(Optional)* Permanent markers.
(These are helpful for writing or drawing on top of glossy paper, but can be omitted.)
- *(Optional)* Plain colored paper, sticky notes, and/or scrapbook paper.
- *(Optional)* Stickers, stamps, and other scrapbooking embellishments.
- *(Optional)* Old hymnals that you can cut hymn lyrics from.

Notes on supplies: While the necessary art supplies are highly flexible based on your budget and access, the materials you provide help set the tone for the journaling time. Professional or student quality art supplies communicate to youth that their reflections are taken seriously and differentiate this time of visual journaling from simple coloring pages. To provide quality art supplies on a budget, you might check discount stores, local “Buy Nothing” groups, or creative reuse stores near you.

(Check [this blog post](#) for a list of creative reuse stores in the US, Australia, Canada, and the UK. Check [this webpage](#) for official “Buy Nothing” groups near you.)

Prayer

Before closing in prayer, you might ask youth if they have any prayer requests or if any of them would like to pray. Inviting youth to pray helps them grow their language of prayer and provides youth leaders a glimpse at what’s weighing on their hearts and minds. The provided prayer can be read communally or by one volunteer. You might also have a closing prayer ritual already established with your youth group which can replace the provided prayer.

How to use this curriculum

This curriculum can be used for Sunday mornings, weeknight gatherings, or at home. While we encourage you to follow the students’ lead and spend as much time as you need on each section, a sample flow for a one hour youth group time might be:

- **Gathering and opening ritual: 5-10 minutes**
Some examples of a weekly opening ritual include lighting a candle, reading a community covenant, giving a one word check in, answering a question of the week, etc.
- **Scripture reading: 5 minutes**
Read the listed scripture together aloud, using whatever translation you prefer.
- **Discussion: 20 minutes**
Using the included prompts as a guide, reflect with the youth on what they noticed in the scripture and how it relates to their lives and the world around them.
- **Journaling time: 20 minutes**
Before starting the journaling time, set expectations for how the time will be used, where youth may go to journal, and how they will know when it is time to regather.
- **Regathering and closing prayer: 5-10 minutes**
Bring the youth back together with a gentle signal such as a chime. Share any prayer requests and invite youth to pray, whether by reading the provided prayer or spontaneously praying.

How to use this curriculum *(continued)*

The weekly curriculum is formatted with the expectation that each youth will receive a copy. Printed copies may even be taped into students' journals. In addition to listing the journaling prompts so youth can complete them independently, this handout can serve as a touchpoint for families to know what was discussed in youth group.





About the Author

Rev. Anna Strickland

Operations Support & Content of A Sanctified Art

Anna Strickland (*she/her*) looks for the Divine in the everyday like treasure in clay jars and first encountered God in the integration of her spiritual self and artistic self. She is a former teacher and college minister, a proud Texas Longhorn and graduate of Iliff School of Theology, a Baptist to the core ministering in ecumenical spaces, and a lover of chaos anchored by the belief that the Spirit is most active in the spaces between us.

A Sanctified Art LLC is a collective of artists in ministry who create resources for worshipping communities. The Sanctified Art team works collaboratively to bring scripture and theological themes to life through film, visual art, curriculum, coloring pages, liturgy, graphic designs, and more. Their mission is to empower churches with resources to inspire creativity in worship and beyond. Driven by the connective and prophetic power of art, they believe that art helps us connect our hearts with our hands, our faith with our lives, and our mess with our God.

Learn more about their work at sanctifiedart.org.

