

JJ's Epic Adventure

Leader's Guide

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Welcome

Dear Jr. Camp Chapel Leader,

Thank you for your priceless investment in our youth. As you know, the younger years are typically the most formative in a person's life. Helping them understand the truth now about who they are and who God is can transform their future and set them on an incredible life journey.

This year's camp theme is "EPIC Story" and our goal is to help the kids discover the wonderful joy of participating in the Story that God is telling. At its heart, the Epic Story is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. From before the beginning of time, God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) had us in mind. He created us so that we could share in everlasting fellowship with Him. He has held nothing back in expressing His deep love for us, giving all upon the cross.

Now, having defeated the evil one and setting us free from the curse of death, He invites us to live out a renewed and redeemed life. This is not just a life hanging out at church, waiting for heaven. No, it is an empowered existence filled with purpose, meaning and endless opportunity to join Him in expressing His love and joy to the world. That sounds like an Epic Adventure to me! What a privilege it is to share this awesome news with our young people!

In this guide, I will provide some additional resources to help you get the most out of the **JJ's Epic Adventure** curriculum. Of course, this curriculum is just a tool. I trust that the Holy Spirit will guide you to many creative ways to share the Story of Stories with our camp kids.

Your fellow "Story" teller,

Gary Weldon

Ps. If you have any questions, comments or concerns, feel free to contact me personally at garyjweldon@gmail.com.

JJ's Epic Adventure - Synopsis

An adolescent girl named JJ is frustrated with her life. From her view, everyone has it better than she does. Deep within her is a longing for more, a life that is filled with real adventure. After an emotional run-in with a bully she falls asleep and awakes at a place called Epic Academy.

The Epic Academy is where kids are invited to discover and embrace their role in the Epic Story. JJ meets Umoya, a kind woman who works at the Academy, and a boy named Evan..

After an unplanned meeting with the Story Master, JJ and Evan catch a glimpse of the Epic Story by watching the Story master work and helping Ranger Chris save a man from a raging river. With the official Epic Adventurer training set to begin, JJ has second thoughts about embarking on a new life and chooses to return home, unchanged. At the last minute, Evan intervenes and encourages her to stay the course.

With the encouragement of Umoya, Chris and the Story Master, JJ discovers that she is ready to embark on her Epic journey. When JJ returns home she struggles with knowing how to live out the things that she's learned. With the help of kind neighbor, JJ begins to look at things differently and befriends a girl who is also looking for a life of adventure. JJ shares with her what she's learned about the Epic Story. The story ends as their Epic journey is just beginning.

How it Works

This curriculum is designed for a six day camp with six individual 15-minute chapel teaching sessions. The directions I will share are for that specific setting. If you are working with a different setting, that is no problem. Feel free to personally adapt it to best fit your particular format.

In each session you, the leader, will read one chapter out loud to the campers. Depending on how fast you speak, the stories will last from 7-12 minutes. You will then ask the campers the 5 Discussion Questions, helping them to unpack what they've heard.

Most kids will love to show you that they understand and will be eager to answer questions. Be sure to give everyone a chance to participate. I've found that offering candy as a reward for answering helps those who are a little shy to open up and it makes the chapel time even more fun.

Once you have worked through the Discussion Questions, read the Key Scripture out loud to the campers. If you feel that the campers didn't quite grasp the spiritual lesson of the day, this is a good place to briefly tie everything together. You're on a limited time schedule (and attention span), so don't worry about trying to get the kids to understand every detail.

The dorm counselors should use the extra time they have with the campers to take the discussion farther. The Additional Followup Questions are provided for that purpose. You'll want to provide each head dorm counselor with a copy of the *JJ's Epic Adventure* story.

To aid with continuity from day to day, you may want to ask the kids a couple questions about what you covered the previous day before starting the next chapter.

Epic Ending: (optional)

At the end of last chapel session you can have a special ceremony that mimics the scene in chapter 5. Have a few other leaders (possibly the dorm counselors) join you. Invite the kids to come forward where you will pin on their Epic Adventurer badge and then circle around them and tell them that you love them and God does too. If you are providing [Take-home Treasures](#), this would be a great time to present those as well.

Preparation

I think you'll find that with a little bit of preparation this curriculum will be very easy to use. Here are some simple things that I recommend doing ahead of time to get ready:

1. Read through the curriculum silently at least once to understand the story flow and then practice reading it out loud twice to get good at sharing the story with passion and appropriate emotion. There is a lot of dialogue, so you'll want to practice until you can change between the characters smoothly.
2. Review the end of chapter questions. They are purposely a mix of fun, easy to remember, questions and deeper, more reflective ones. You may decide to craft additional questions to use, either during the chapel or back in the dorms. Keep in mind that the kids are smarter and more intuitive than you might think. My experience in the last three years of using the story/questions format is that the kids usually get the point without needing a lot of overt explanation.
3. Pray that God will move powerfully among the students. This curriculum, or any curriculum for that matter, is not able to change a child's life. But, the Holy Spirit is able to use you (and me) and tools like *JJ's Epic Adventure* to do his transformative work.
4. Spend some time discussing the *JJ's Epic Adventure* story and follow-up questions with the Dorm Counselors and others who will be working with the campers. Who knows what creative ideas they might come up with!
5. BONUS: Read John Eldridge's *EPIC: The Story God is Telling*. This will immerse your heart and mind in the concepts of Epic Story.
 - a. <http://www.amazon.com/Epic-The-Story-God-Telling/dp/0785288791>

Getting into Character

While it's true that this story can be effective when read by someone wearing old gym shorts and a sweaty camp t-shirt, just imagine how amazing the experience will be for the kids when the story is presented by a real-life Epic Adventurer. A simple change of outfit can help YOU become an exciting part of this Epic story.

Here's what I recommend:

Epic Adventurer Outfit:

- Khaki pants/shorts and matching button-down short-sleeved shirt
 - Outback-type hat
 - Epic Adventurer Badge
- *It would also be a great idea to round out your look with your pockets full of the items that you'll be providing in the Take-home Treasures.

Your Backstory:

No character is complete without a backstory. The opening chapel session is the best time to introduce yourself (in character) to the campers. Your opening statement might sound something like this:

“Hi, I'm (first name) the Epic Adventurer! Once upon a time, long long ago I was a child just like the you. I was bored and frustrated with my life and hoped that someday my life would be amazing. Thankfully I learned about the Epic Story.”

“Do you know about the Epic Story?”

“You don't? Oh, my! We need to fix that!”

“Well, I'm sure that you know what a story is, but do you know what 'Epic' means?”

“If something is 'Epic' it means that it is: Grand, adventurous, fantastical and all around awesome! And that's what kind of story the Epic Story is!”

“This week at _____ Camp, we're going to teach you all about it. And I've got a great idea how to do that! First we're going to study hard, we'll stay in class all day, take lot's of quizzes and tests. There will be tons of homework, no time to play. It will be just like school! What do you think?”

[Expect a collective groan from the kids]

“Oh, you don’t like that idea...”

“Well... I suppose I could read you the amazing story of *JJ’s Epic Adventure* instead. *[hold up the story for them to see]* How does that sound?”

[Hopefully the kids cheer this idea]

“Great! Let’s get started with chapter 1 of *JJ’s Epic Adventure*, “My Dreadfully Boring Life”.

You’re welcome to adapt your backstory to whatever you feel fits best. Trust me, each day as you show up to chapel as (Your name) the Epic Adventurer, the kids will be super excited to hear what you have to share next. You can use your imagination and further develop your Adventurer persona throughout the week. Have fun with it and the kids will enjoy it too!

Take-Home Treasures

By the end of the week, the kids will be very engaged in the story. Having something for them to take home with them to remind them of what they've learned, is a great opportunity to cement the important lessons in their hearts and minds. It's also a great time to love on them by giving them some cool stuff.

Below are some ideas to help you build your take home gifts. You can do as little or as much as your budget allows. Many items can be hand made or purchased from someplace like OrientalTrading.com for a low cost.

- **Epic Adventurer Badge** - this can be a 'homemade' badge crafted from paper and laminated with a pin in the back and their first name written on the front. See separate sheet for badge design idea.
- **Candy** - enough said (everyone loves candy). Pizza shaped candy could be a reminder of the 4 slices of pizza that JJ ate when she arrived at the Academy.
- **Small blank notebook** - like what the Story Master was using and something for the kids to record their Epic stories in. You could write on the front: (First name's) Epic Story
 - http://www.orientaltrading.com/diy-notebooks-a2-56_9084.fltr?Ntt=notebook
- **Pen** - a reminder of the Pen that the Story Master uses and something for them to use in their notebook
- **Paracord (Survival) Bracelet** - Every adventurer needs one of these right? And technically it's a bracelet of rope for emergency situations. Sounds like something Ranger Chris would have.
 - <http://www.orientaltrading.com/paracord-bracelets-a2-13651718.fltr?Ntt=paracord>
- **Pocket-sized Bible (New Testament)** - This is truly giving them a copy of the Epic Story
 - <http://www.zondervan.com/more/bibles-in-bulk/niv-the-story-of-god-student-edition-new-testament>
- **Adventurer Hat** - Depending on your budget, you may want to splurge and get them each an official adventurer hat like yours.
 - http://www.orientaltrading.com/outback-hats-a2-15_44.fltr?Ntt=safari%20hat

