



Deep calls to deep in the  
river of your wisteria; all  
your waves and breakers  
have swept over me.  
Psalm 42:7

## An Emoji Dive Into God's Word

# Inner Venture

He is like a man  
building a house,  
who dug down deep  
and laid the  
foundation on rock.  
When a flood came,  
the torrent struck that  
house but could not  
shake it, because it  
was well built.

Luke 6:48

### INTRO

God's Word. We know it's important. We know teens (and the church) need to be better equipped in handling God's Word. But with the many obstacles to overcome, i.e., busyness of families and ministries, tiredness of teens, it's easy for meaningful Bible study to languish at the bottom of a packed youth ministry agenda. It doesn't have to be that way. Use this devotional exercise, and the exploitation of emoji pop culture, to ramp up the role of God's Word in the lives of your teens and in the life of your ministry. By the way, you'll see two Open options. A third option is to use both.

Because the best teaching and discipleship come out of the overflow of the teacher/discipler, we encourage you to do Inner Venture as a personal study before leading teens. [NOTE: This exercise is adapted from Inner Venture 2015 so parts may be familiar.]

### MATERIALS

You'll need a whiteboard for your room.

#### Each student will need:

- a Bible, either his/her own or one provided by you.
- a copy of the student page (which you have permission to reproduce).
- a pen or pencil or colored pencils

### OPEN

#### (option 1)

After your group has gathered, open your session with these questions:

**How many of you have ever received a love letter?**

**What do you do with that letter (assuming it's from someone you like)?**

**How many of you have ever sent a love letter? (at any age: second grade or recently)**

*Ask for volunteers to share their love letter stories.*

**What do you hope happens when your "crush" receives your letter? How do you hope it's received?**

Then share in your own words:

**Have you thought about how the Bible is God's love letter to us? He has told us why He loves us and how He loves us. And He desperately wants to hear from us in response to His letter.**

**How would you feel if your "crush" treated your love letter the way you treat God's love letter?**

#### (option 2)

Draw your group's attention to the list of names printed on their student sheets. Share with your students that you're going to give them a Bible pop quiz—asking them to put these names in Bible order. Be sure to express, however, that this is a "no guilt" pop quiz, that you don't expect anyone to know the correct order. Rather, you are using this as an exercise to help them simply establish a baseline.

Share:

**The names under the "Open" exercise are famous people from the Bible, each representing a different era of Scripture. Take a couple minutes to put these in historical order.**

After two minutes, call for your group's attention and share the correct order from the chart at the top of the next page.

QUIZ	CORRECT
Daniel	Noah
Noah	Abraham
King Saul	Moses
Abraham	Samson
Esther	King Saul
Paul	Daniel
Moses	Esther
Samson	Paul

Then ask these questions:

**Was this a difficult or frustrating exercise for you?**

**Is it important to be able to put these names in order?**

*You may want to express that, while it is important to know the order of these people, this isn't the end goal. The end goal is to know God. We end up knowing the order of these people as we get to know God through His Word.*

## ● DIVING IN

- Transition into study time with this exercise. Ask students to hold a Bible in their hands and to shout out one-word descriptions that come to mind when they think about the Bible.

*Possible responses: big, informative, confusing, mysterious, comforting, inspiring, overwhelming*

Share that the Bible can be confusing and a bit overwhelming when you look at it all at once. So don't think of it like reading a novel or a text book, rather think of engaging Scripture in short, but powerful, bursts.



Explain that nearly every book of the Bible contains verses that point to, not only the importance of God's Word, but also how we are to experience it. One passage in particular, Proverbs 2:1-9, vividly captures God's heart for how we are to engage His Word.

While the passage is written as from a father to his son, we can take the passage personally as if from God to us, because, well, it is from God to us (and that's *all* of us, male and female). The passage shows how God wants us to interact with Scripture. And here's a bonus: it also tells us of blessings we get to enjoy when we interact with Scripture the way God wants us to.

**Option:** you may want to ask students to disperse to a quiet part of the room or a quiet place nearby for this exercise. It's important to create an atmosphere of solitude so that students can experience this passage as distraction-free as possible.

Share in your own words:

**This passage is printed on your student sheet. Or you may want to look up the passage in your Bible. Take a minute to read the passage in solitude and do these things (see next page):**

1. Draw a smiley  over any actions you see that describe how we are to interact with Scripture.
2. Draw a rainbow  over anything that sounds like a promise when we interact with Scripture.

## TAKING IT INWARD

After a few minutes, call for your group's attention and use the questions below to process as a group what each student discovered in solitude.

Look at your smileys—the actions phrases that describe how we are to interact with Scripture. What type of approach to God's words and wisdom is being described in this passage?

Which of the following words best describe the approach and which are not accurate descriptions?  
*Casual, intentional, haphazard, intense, deep, brief, aggressive, passive, focused*

Think about your personal "quiet time"—Bible study, prayer, etc. How would this time change for you if you were to engage in Scripture and prayer the way this passage suggests?

Compare the action phrases from Proverbs 2 with your personal devotional time. Which of these phrases do you find:

- ...most convicting?
- ...most inspiring?
- ...most lacking in your time with Scripture?

Look at your rainbows—things that will happen when we interact with Scripture in the manner that these verses put forth. What is being promised to us?

How do these promises match up with what you desire in your Christian walk?

What conclusions about Bible study can we draw from this passage?

## PUTTING INTO PRACTICE – The "So What?!"

Ask:

When do you find your faith most challenged?  
*Possible responses: temptation, doubt, disappointment, intellectual challenges*

How can the promises of Proverbs 2 help you in those challenges?

Share:

The promises of Proverbs 2 represent what we need in order to overcome challenges and tests. God's Word will give you understanding so that when you confront temptation, doubt, disappointment, challenges, you will be able to make decisions based on what is "right, and just, and fair—every good path." You will be equipped to choose correctly and resolutely. But it doesn't happen by itself. It starts with the action words of Proverbs 2: Accept, store up, turn your ear, apply your heart, call out, cry aloud, seek and search diligently and intentionally. So, let's start there.

Explain that you're going to close your session by turning the action words of Proverbs 2 into action words of daily life. This will give students a jump start in ramping up their personal Bible study. Point out the action phrases printed in the chart on your student page under "Putting Into Practice." Then invite students to do the following:

1. Take a minute to fill in the middle column, writing in your own words what the Scripture action means to you.
2. Spend a minute filling in the right-hand column, writing a specific task or action you can do to bring the action into daily life. Think practical, as in something you can do today. Maybe think about other emojis you can use for personal Bible study.

If students need a little more explanation, use an example from the chart below.

Scripture Action	General Action (What does the Scripture action mean?)	Specific Task (What will you do?)
Accept	<i>Believe. Approach Scripture as life-changing truth.</i>	<i>Believe John 1.</i>
Store up	<i>Memorize verses, understand concepts, know God's story.</i>	<i>Memorize Proverbs 2:1-9.</i>
Turn your ear	<i>Pay attention, listen for God's voice.</i>	<i>Dedicate at least 15 minutes a day to just listen for God.</i>
Apply your heart	<i>Commit to these actions.</i>	<i>Sacrifice something for God's Word (reduce video games, fast a meal or TV).</i>
Call out; cry aloud	<i>When you don't understand, ask God.</i>	<i>Verbalize your questions and prayers to God.</i>
Seek and search diligently and intentionally	<i>Go beyond haphazard reading. Have a plan.</i>	<i>Draw an emoji megaphone over every instruction you see in James.  Draw an emoji heart over references to "love" in 1 John and journal everything you learn about love from these references.</i>

While students are working, re-create the above chart on your whiteboard, leaving the two right columns blank. After a couple minutes call for your students' attention. Start with the middle column, "General Action." Ask students to share how they interpreted what each "Scripture Action" means. Seek to create a phrase that captures a group consensus and write that on your whiteboard.

Then, ask students to share their "Specific Tasks" for each Scripture action. You may want to simply ask them to share their favorite task of the seven they came up with in their solitude time. Write these in the far-right column on your board.

**Start Now**

Ask students to commit to do at least one of the specific tasks today, and then to do one of these tasks every day for the next seven days, at least! The goal is to make Proverbs 2-style Bible study a regular part of their week. Work as a group to establish ways to encourage each other to take an inner venture with God and His Word every day. One final note: Personal devotional time is often referred to as "Quiet Time." But going by these verses, this time could be anything but quiet. Maybe the first item of business for the week is to create a more descriptive or creative title than "Quiet Time."

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**Some things to share:**

- What are your emoji ideas for Bible study?
- What are ways you plan to encourage each other to have a daily inner venture?
- What would you like to teach other youth ministries about Proverbs 2?
- What new title did you create for "Quiet Time"?

● Open

Bible People	Your Order	Corrected Order
Daniel		
Noah		
King Saul		
Abraham		
Esther		
Paul		
Moses		
Samson		

● Diving In



**Proverbs 2:1-9 (NIV)**



<sup>1</sup> My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, <sup>2</sup> turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding—<sup>3</sup> indeed, if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, <sup>4</sup> and if you look for it as for silver search for it as for hidden treasure, <sup>5</sup> then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. <sup>6</sup> For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. <sup>7</sup> He holds success in store for the upright, is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, <sup>8</sup> for he guards the course of the just protects the way of his faithful ones. <sup>9</sup> Then you will understand what is right and just and fair—every good path.

● Seal the Deal

Scripture Action	General Action (What does the Scripture action mean?)	Specific Task (What will you do?)
accept		
store up		
turn your ear		
apply your heart		
call out; cry aloud		
seek and search diligently and intentionally		