



GOALS

As students experience this session in Faith Basics, they will:

- Learn about some promises that will come our way if we diligently study and search God's Word.
- See why the Word of God is foundational to a study on the basics of the faith.
- Look at their own lives and determine whether their relationship with God's Word is strong enough to help them with their relationship with God and strong enough to overcome the "evil one."

MATERIALS: Group

- colored pencils (at least two per student)
- whiteboard, dry-erase markers

MATERIALS: Each Student

- Different colored markers or colored pencils
- Student journal pages and Scripture Sheets
- Bible
- Pen for journaling
- Review Item: a tiny Bible and string (See Putting Into Practice at the end of the session; search "My Little Bible" on Amazon.com for inexpensive tiny Bibles)

MATERIALS: Just a Note or Two

Note 1: Digging In Exercises

There are two options for the DIGGING IN exercises with regard to observing Scripture with your middle school group:

1. **Creating wall-sized Scripture sheets on butcher paper or poster board (or using data projection) and asking a volunteer to mark key words while the other group members mark their own sheets and coach the volunteer along in the exercise. This option will require a little more prep before your session but lends itself well to middle school attention spans and learning styles.**
2. **Having the students work in solitude using their Scripture sheets. By creating a retreat atmosphere with the solitude, you are communicating the importance of hearing from God through His Word. Middle school students respond well to this challenge.**

You may want to vary your approach within the sessions, or from one session to the next. For the sake of simplicity, the Lead It instructions will simply say, "have students mark" for any Scripture exercise. The leader will need to determine ahead of time which approach to use.

Note 2: Faith Chain Review

A key feature of the Faith Basics study (middle school) is its unique "Faith Chain Review." For each session you'll see an item suggested that represents the particular basic studied in that session. Students will build a "Faith Chain" that will serve as a reminder of these six basics of the faith. You can see a complete list of these items at the end of this Lead It guide as well as online with the Faith Basics Lead It guides (www.inword.org/online-guides).

OPEN

After your students have gathered, lead your group in a discussion of love letters

Who has ever sent a classic “Yes/No” check-box love letter?

Invite students to briefly share their stories. Were their letters successful?

Who has ever received a love letter of *any* kind (check-box, text, email)?

Invite students to briefly share their stories.

What do you do when you receive a love letter from someone you like? How do you treat that letter? How do you respond?

As students share, seek to draw out responses similar to these:

-you read it over and over

-you share it with friends

-you respond accordingly

After some discussion, transition into study mode with this question:

In what ways is God’s Word, the Bible, a love letter to us? How is it similar to what we’ve just discussed?

After discussing the analogy of a love letter, share the following in your own words:

Whether it’s in the form of a bound book, or in the letters of an app on your device it doesn’t matter, the Bible is God’s love letter to us. The entire message of the Bible is His love. If we are to truly understand the basics of our faith, as this study seeks to help us do, we must accept God’s Word as a love note from someone closer than our own breath. We must explore His letter in a way that allows us to truly understand it and helps us answer the question, “What is God saying to us today?”

So, *Faith Basics* must start with a session on the importance of God’s Word. It is the only thing we have that tells us about God and teaches us how to have a relationship with Him.

Thankfully, it is also all we need. Before we dive in, allow your heart to be soft enough so that God’s Word can leave a deep impression. With that image in mind, listen to these words from 2 Timothy:

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

–2 Timothy 3:14-15 (emphasis added)

DIGGING IN

Take a minute to introduce your students to the idea of the “conditional statement.” Yes, this sounds heady for middle schoolers, and it is. But they have already been experiencing the consequences and benefits of conditional statements in their own lives. With the right examples, it could be fun.

Say something like this:

There is an important type of statement in the Bible, and in life, called a conditional statement. We know them as “if/then” statements. It works like this:

If you eat a bowl of ice cream (condition), then ... (conclusion)

If you eat 10 bowls of ice cream, then...

If you disobey your parents, then...

If you do an extra house chore without being asked, then...

Now ask students to supply their own examples.

Then (no pun intended) share that the Bible is full of “if/then” statements. “If you do this, then this will happen.” Point out that the passage they’re about to experience is one giant “if/then” statement.

Share the following instructions:

**As you read Proverbs 2:1-6 using the Scripture sheet provided, do this:
Circle the “if” conditions with one color and draw a box around the “then” conclusion in another.**

While students are reading the passage, make two columns on your whiteboard, labelling the left-hand column “Fave Ifs” and the right-hand column “The Big Then.”

After a few minutes, ask students to look over what they circled on their Scripture sheets and share their favorite phrase that tells us how to look at God’s Word (the “if” statements they circled). Note these in the “Fave Ifs” on your whiteboard and invite students to write these on their journal pages if they wish. Then ask:

What do you notice about these “if” statements? What do they seem to have in common?

After a few ideas, point out to your students that each “if” statement conveys the idea of intense, purposeful action. You may want to share the following example:

One of the “if” statements is: “if you search like you’re searching for hidden treasure.” If I told you there was a stash of cash hidden outside, describe for me how you’d search for that cash:

Thoroughly: leave no stone unturned

Systematically: keep track of where I’ve searched

Purposefully: waste no time

Quickly: find it before others do

Then ask students the question below about the “Big Then” and note their response in the “then” column on your board and invite them to note this on their journal page.

So, if we search God’s Word that way, THEN something happens. How many “then” statements did you find?

One or two, depending on how you count: Then you will understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.

TAKING IT INWARD

Help your group internalize this information using the questions below.

What do you think it means to “Understand the fear of the Lord”? Is this a good thing or a bad thing?

You may need to teach your students about “good fear”...a respect for what God says and a trust of the consequences we’ll face if we don’t obey what He says. When you understand this kind of fear of the Lord, you are in a position to trust Him and do what He says.

What do you think it means to “find the knowledge of God”?

Let conversation be free-flowing but eventually steer the discussion toward the conclusion that “finding the knowledge of God” is similar to a phrase they be more familiar with: “Discovering God’s Will.”

So, what will happen if we search God’s Word like we are looking for a hidden stash of cash?

Help your group make the connection that things happen to us when we explore God’s Word with intensity and purpose: we have a greater understanding of obedience (and desire to obey) and a greater knowledge of God. These are two of the biggest goals in the Christian life!

DIGGING DEEPER

Before you move into this next exercise with your students, decide which option you'd like to use to help your students explore Scripture in a Proverbs 2 way:

1. **Personal Solitude:** Invite students to a place of solitude for their own personal Bible retreat. Instruct them to do the exercise in solitude and then you will process it as a group.
2. **Smaller Groups:** Divide your group into smaller groups of two or three. Ask students to read the passages and discuss what they find.
3. **Whole Group:** Work together as a group. Invite students to explore each Scripture on their own and discuss as a group as you go along.

Share with your students that you are going to give them a few minutes to practice Proverbs 2 intensity. Point out the Scripture passages found on their journal pages under Digging Deeper. Each passage is a snippet from God's Word about God's Word. Using the option you chose above, ask students to read these verses from their Bibles or Bible apps and look for anything they learn about Scripture from these passages. You may want to mention the various ways "Scripture" is referenced, i.e. precepts, Jesus' words, Word of God, etc.

Isaiah 55:10-11

- God's Word will not return to Him empty
- it will accomplish God's purpose for which He sent it

Psalms 119:98-101

- His commands make me wiser than my enemies
- they are always with me
- I have more insight than my teachers if I meditate on God's statutes
- I have more understanding than my elders if I obey God's Word
- the understanding I gain from God's precepts helps me to hate every wrong path (and keeps me from temptation!)

Matthew 22:29

- Sadducees were in error because they did not know the Scripture or the power of God; let's hope Jesus never has to say this to us!

Mark 13:31

- heaven and earth will pass away, but God's words never will!

Hebrews 4:12

- Word of God is living, active
- it is sharper than a double-edged sword
- it penetrates, dividing soul, spirit
- it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart

James 1:22-25

- do what the Word says!
- don't just listen to it!
- we'll be blessed if we do what the Word says
- the Law gives freedom

TAKING IT INWARD

Help your group internalize this info with the following questions:

As you have thought about your own personal interaction with the Bible in this session, how has God moved on you in any way?

How have these verses inspired you to want to know God better through His Word?

Ask your students to circle on their lists (from the Digging Deeper exercise above) three traits of God's Word that stand out to them the most. Allow a couple minutes, then have them share what they marked and why.

PUTTING INTO PRACTICE

Take a couple minutes to brainstorm with your group ways you can search God's Word as if searching for a stash of cash—intensely, thoroughly, purposefully. Challenge them to find ways to make God's Word a priority in their lives and to think about how this might change them. Invite them to write down 2-3 ideas under Putting Into Practice on their journal pages.

If you need some examples to help them get started, here are a few suggestions (you may also want to suggest some of the methods of Bible study you came up with in your Prep It time):

- **Own a book:** choose a one-chapter book of the Bible like Jude or Philemon and become your family's authority on that book. Who wrote it? To whom? Why was it written? What do you learn about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit from this book? What do you learn about you?
- **Read the red:** pick up a red-letter edition of the Bible and choose one of the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) to read Jesus' words in red. Keep a running list of instructions and promises and anything that makes you go "wow!"
- **Find the instructions:** the book of James is thick with practical instructions on living out the Christian faith. Make a list of all the instructions in this book. Then do them.
- **Find the love:** the chapter of 1 John 4 likely records more uses of the word "love" per capita than any other chapter in the Bible. Find each reference and make a list of all you learn about love from this one chapter.

Give students a couple minutes to write down their ideas and then ask for volunteers to share what they wrote down.

Before you wrap up, distribute the first item for your Faith Chain review, including a piece of string (or something similar) for students to string their review items throughout the study.

Faith Chain Review

String — Distribute a 10" (approximately) piece of string to each student for them to use as the chain of their "Faith Chain."

Tiny Bible — Distribute one to each of your students. You may want to come up with a couple of key points for your students to remember about this lesson whenever they look at these Bibles.