

# **Yesterday. Today. Forever.**

**Module: Loving The Story**

**Lesson 1: SEEK**

## **Objectives**

- Students will learn that it's okay to ask questions in order to deepen their faith
- Students will learn that asking questions is crucial for the pursuit of God's wisdom.

## **Materials Needed**

- 1 pen/pencil per student
- Strips of paper (min. 2 per student)
- 1 cardboard box
- 1 copy of Appendix 1 per 3-5 students

## **Minds On**

Hand two slips of paper to each student. Have them write one question on each slip that they may be asking about God, or church, or youth group, etc. Encourage them to ask whatever is on their mind, and reassure them that the questions will remain anonymous (remind them not to write their names on it). Once they have written out their questions, instruct them to deposit their papers into the cardboard box.

Afterwards, have 1-2 leaders should draw one question from the box and try to answer it on the spot. (**Leader's note:** If the leader feels the question will take too long to respond to or they are not sure of the answer, they will research it and post an answer the following week.) In the following weeks, a leader will choose another 1-2 questions from the box and will prepare a 1-minute answer. (Leader's note: In some cases, the 1-minute answer may not be sufficient for some students. Encourage those students to individually approach the leader at another time to dig deeper into the subject.)

## **Action**

**Prompt:** What compels you to believe in something? Experience? Conviction? If your best friend told you an outrageously ludicrous story, and reassured you by saying, 'I saw it with my own two eyes!' would that help compel you to believe?

Share an outrageous story that you once heard or read (it doesn't have to be true).

Afterwards, ask students to vote whether they believe the story is true by raising their left hand, or not by raising their right hand.

Read aloud Matthew 14:22-33.

**Ask:** What enabled Peter to believe? What caused things to change?

(He kept his eyes on Jesus...because he saw Him walking on water, Peter also believed he was capable of the same amazing feat. But when he took his eyes off him, and saw how rough the waters were, the smallest shred of doubt crept into his mind.)

Read John 20: 24-29.

**Prompt:** Thomas had to feel the holes in Jesus' hands before he was convinced of his resurrection. Sometimes, we need that physical, tangible evidence...but unlike Thomas, it is not always provided. This is where faith comes into play.

**Ask:** What does, or doesn't have them convinced that what the Bible says about Jesus is true? (Encourage them to be honest with their answers.)

If there are some who express things that cause them to have doubts, ask them what might it take to convince them. You can also ask whether a student or leader can share a personal experience where God has shown them his presence in a very real way. (Leader's note: Ensure you have someone selected ahead of time in case no one volunteers.)

Remind students that asking questions allow us to deepen our faith and discover truth. Leaders should encourage students to keep their minds open, and remember that, when answering questions, it is more important to answer them honestly than concretely.

### **Consolidate/Debrief**

Gather in groups of 3-5 students. (If possible, have at least one adult leader in each group to listen to responds but not offer a response.) Distribute Appendix 1 to each group and ask them to answer those questions.

When you sense the groups have had enough time to work through the questions, call them back together. Invite them to share anything that came up in their discussions that would be helpful for the rest of the group to hear, particularly from question 3.

Conclude in prayer asking for God to deepen their faith and help them know that he is trustworthy!

## Appendix 1

1. Has there ever been a time you were unsure of something, and something or someone managed to convince you to believe it? Tell us about it.
2. On the flipside, have you ever been convinced that something is so true, and you tried to convince others?
3. What sort of actions can you take to deepen your faith?
4. What is one question that you have about your own faith right now? (Encourage students to submit these questions into the drop box, or offer insight if you feel up to it.)

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## Module: Loving The Story

### Lesson 2: KNOW

#### Objectives

- Students will learn to discern the difference between knowledge and wisdom, and understand that both are crucial to our walk with God

#### Materials Needed

- Flipchart and markers
- Small prizes
- 1 perfectly assembled ice cream sundae (keep in freezer until Action)
- 1 spoon
- 1 copy of Appendix 1 for every 3-5 students
- optional: Ingredients to make sundaes (e.g. ice cream, whipped cream, chocolate chips, etc.) (**Leader's note:** Be aware of any food allergies such as peanuts.)
- optional: Two resources that could be useful in this activity
  - <http://www.sporcle.com/games/g/biblebooksold>
  - <http://www.sporcle.com/games/g/biblebooksnew>

## **Minds On**

For the Bible knowledge test, divide students into three lines, forming three teams. Appoint one person to write down the answers on the flipchart. The persons at the front of the line will begin for their team. Each person will have 10 seconds to name one of the 66 books in the Bible. If they do it, they get 10 points; otherwise, they are not awarded any points. The person goes back to the beginning of the line and the host asks the next line. Continue until all 66 books are listed or six consecutive people (i.e. two from each line) aren't able to answer correctly. Answers cannot be repeated.

Take this time to congratulate the winning team in some way (ex prizes, trophy, pat on the back, etc.). Ask the students if they found the exercise to be easy or difficult.

**Prompt:** (In the last series, we learned about knowing God's story...some of the concrete facts about what it means to follow Jesus, the history and the stories of people's faith.) As we delve into this new series, we're going to begin to ask ourselves, "How does this apply to my life? What does all this mean for me?" Being Christian isn't just about knowing the books of the Bible back to front. Knowledge of the Bible is crucial, but it can't be everything.

## **Action**

**Leader's note:** Some students will excel at the Minds On activity while others will struggle. The key point of this lesson is that, though the knowledge of our faith in God is crucial, it is only the first step in engaging in our lifelong relationship with God.

Have the students get into groups of 2-3. Each small group will define the words knowledge and wisdom including both similarities and differences between the words. Each group should be prepared to share their answer with the larger group. When each group shares, record some key words or phrases on the flipchart.

**Prompt:** These two concepts, while closely associated with each other, are, in fact, two different things. It is important for us to remember this, because we can fill our heads with facts upon facts about anything...but what good is it unless you make use of those facts in some way?

Have a student read aloud Proverbs 8:12. Have another student read aloud Ephesians 3:16-19. Ask a third student to read verse 19 again.

**Prompt:** God gave us the ability and the desire to learn about His word, so that we may understand...even if it's just in small portions...a part of who He is. But if we don't have the wisdom to allow it to inspire us, to change us from the inside out, then the knowledge that the Bible provides is meaningless.

Hold up the ice cream sundae and the spoon.

Optional: With the sundae ingredients out, give students 2 minutes to build their own sundae and instruct them NOT to eat it.

**Prompt:** Think of this sundae as God's infinite, provisional wisdom. It's there, just waiting to be consumed, right? The spoon is our Bible. It is our tool whose purpose is used to collect and consume God's wisdom (gesture towards sundae) for our benefit, just as the spoon is our tool used to collect and consume the deliciousness of this sundae. Knowledge is knowing what the spoon is, and what purpose it serves. But it means nothing if we don't use it to gain wisdom.

Take one bite of the sundae (optional: Have students take one bite of their sundae). Ask students to rate how delicious the sundae is with two thumbs up, one up and one down, or two down.

**Prompt:** God has given us the spoon. If we don't know how to use it, there are ways we can find out. His gift is wisdom (gesture towards sundae again)...and we need only ask if we wish to seek it out.

### **Consolidate/Debrief**

Have students form groups of 3-5 and provide them with Appendix 1. Each group will provide a summary of their discussion to the larger group, especially with question 4.

When the groups have had enough time to work through the questions, call them back together. Invite them to share anything that came up in their discussions that would be helpful for the rest of the group to hear. Following this, conclude in prayer asking for God's knowledge AND wisdom!

## Appendix 1

1. When have you found yourself in a situation where you didn't have the knowledge that you needed to move forward? What did you do about it?
2. How would you define the word wisdom? Do you believe that it is something that everyone can possess? Who are some wise people that you know?
3. Re-read Ephesians 3:16-19. How do you feel knowing that God's love surpasses all human understanding? Do you find this to be comforting or disturbing?
4. How do you proceed with your life knowing that God's love for us is limitless? Does it change anything?

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**Lesson 3: BELIEVE**

## **Objectives**

- Students will learn that while knowledge and belief are each an integral part of our faith journey, God calls us to use them together to achieve his purposes for us.

## **Materials Needed**

- Gymnasium mat or some other soft landing
- 1 chair or table, ideally between 1½ and 2½ feet off the ground
- 1 spoon
- optional: LCD projector, sound system and laptop with YouTube video (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9wP7Fv93Y8U> starting at clip 2:37)
- 1 copy of Appendix 1 per 3-5 students

## **Minds On**

Set up a chair and a gymnasium mat at the front of your meeting room. Have the students select one adult volunteer. Convey to the group that the volunteer needs to be brave...bold...fearless...and incredibly trusting. Have the volunteer stand on a table or chair, about 1 and a half to 2 feet off the ground, and then invite the rest of the group to stand in front of him or her in two lines with their arms out and firmly locked in front of them. Ask the volunteer if he or she trusts the group enough to catch him or her. If the answer is, “yes”, then instruct the leader to fall back into the groups’ outstretched arms.

The group will catch the volunteer with the utmost care, and then gently lay him or her on the ground. Applaud the student for his or her bravery...and then ask for other volunteers.

## **Action**

**Prompt:** It takes courage to leap off a ledge like this into the arms of people you’re not too sure you can trust. It takes courage to try something you’ve never done before...like skydiving, rock climbing, hang gliding. Even activities that aren’t so physically intense take courage...something like performing on stage for the first time, or starting a new job. And just like those things, it takes courage to stand up for what you believe in. For the past few weeks, we have been learning about seeking knowledge and wisdom, we’ve learned the difference between the two, and how wisdom possesses knowledge. (You may want to ask if they remember the spoon analogy from the previous week.) Knowledge is knowing what the spoon is for...understanding its purpose. Wisdom is knowing how and when to use the spoon. But how does knowledge and wisdom apply to our own lives, our own faith journey? What good is knowledge and wisdom...if you don’t believe in it?

Divide students into groups of 5-7. Each group is to prepare a drama based on Daniel 3 (they can choose to modernize the drama if they’d like).

Leader's note: Instead of having students present a drama, you could also show the YouTube video.

**Ask:** Have you ever believed in something so much, that you were willing to lay down your life for it? (Allow students a moment to answer that question internally.)

**Prompt:** Our faith is something that can't be taken light-heartedly. It takes an incredible amount of conviction...and this conviction is backed by the knowledge and wisdom that we obtain as we continually grow stronger in our faith. And with this conviction...comes courage. Courage to stand up and say, "Yes...I believe in God." (If applicable, share a story about a time when you showed conviction and courage for something you believe(d) in, ideally about your own faith. Compare it to the conviction of the three men in Daniel 3. You may also ask one or two students share a similar short story.)

Have a student read Matthew 5:11-12. Hold up the spoon once again.

**Prompt:** We know what the spoon is for...we know what it's capable of...and we know how to use it. But if we can't be sure of its purpose, if we can't believe that it's capable of doing what it's meant to do, then there's no point in having it. Without the spoon, things get so much more messy...without faith, our journey will get so much more complicated and messy...kind of like if I tried eating a sundae with my bare hands.

### **Consolidate/Debrief**

Have students form groups of 3-5 and provide them with Appendix 1. Each group will provide a summary of their discussion to the larger group.

When the groups have had enough time to work through the questions, call them back together. Invite them to share anything that came up in their discussions that would be helpful for the rest of the group to hear. Following this, conclude in prayer.

## Appendix 1

1. What is the scariest thing you've ever done? (i.e. first time on a roller-coaster, zip-lining, etc.)
2. Give an example of a time when you had to stand up for something you believed in. What challenges did you face? Were you successful?
3. Oppositely, was there a time when you were unable to stand up for something you believed? What happened? Did your beliefs change on this occasion?
4. Re-cap Daniel 3. Does the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego inspire you to remain convicted in your faith? Can you relate to them in any way?

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## Module: Loving the Story

### Lesson 4: INTEGRATE/EMULATE

#### Objectives

- Students will learn to integrate knowledge, wisdom, and belief so that they can understand what it means to live boldly by faith.
- Students will aspire to emulate Christ's love within ourselves, and reflect it upon others in a kind and compassionate way.

#### Materials Needed

- Ingredients for milkshake (each makes 1 cup)
  - strawberry: 1/3 cup sliced strawberries, 2/3 tsp vanilla extract, 1/2 cup milk, 2/3 cup strawberry ice cream
  - chocolate: 1 1/3 tbsp chocolate syrup (e.g. NesQuik), 2/3 tsp vanilla extract, 1/2 cup milk, 2/3 cup chocolate ice cream
  - vanilla: 1/3 tsp vanilla extract, 1/2 cup milk, 2/3 cup vanilla ice cream
  - Leader's note: Have three tables, each with ingredients to make a milkshake (i.e. a strawberry table, a vanilla table and a chocolate table). Be aware of any food allergies in the group e.g. lactose intolerant.
- Blender
- 1 cup per student
- Flipchart and markers

## Minds On

To conclude this module, students will be making milkshakes. When you dismiss them, students are to choose one of three tables to join (strawberry, chocolate or vanilla). (If needed, even out the groups depending on how many ingredients you prepared for.) Give each student a cup. When instructed to go, have students fill their cup with the appropriate ingredients (if needed, print the recipe from “Materials Needed”). However, do not blend them yet.

Ask students to vote whether they would drink this milkshake in its current state by raising their hands.

## Action

**Prompt:** Over the last few weeks, we’ve been exploring concepts like knowledge, wisdom and conviction, and thinking about what role they play in our faith journey. Tonight, we’re going to find out what brings it all together. Hopefully, by the end of tonight, you will see how these three things, as great as they are on their own, can become something incredible and powerful when brought together under the lens of discovering and journeying through our faith in God.

Ask students to suggest definitions of these words. Have someone write them on a flipchart.

Divide students into six groups and assign each group a number from 1-6. Have each group complete the following tasks:

1. Come up with 3 examples of knowledge that is very trivial. (e.g. Kim Kardashian was born on October 21, 1980 in Los Angeles, California, the daughter of attorney Robert Kardashian and his wife Kris.) Then give them to group 3 and quietly observe what they do with the examples.

2. Come up with 3 examples of knowledge that is biblical based. (e.g. God loved the world so much, He gave his son...whoever believes in Him will live forever.)  
Then give them to group 4 and quietly observe what they do with those examples.
3. Quietly observe group 1 as they complete their task. With their given examples, suggest how each fact could be used or lived out.
4. Quietly observe group 2 as they complete their task. With their given examples, suggest how each fact could be used or lived out.
5. Compile a list of 5 people who you feel demonstrated conviction well but in a negative manner. (e.g. Adolf Hitler, Osama bin Laden, King Saul in the Bible)
6. Compile a list of 5 people who you feel demonstrated conviction well in a positive manner. (e.g. Barack Obama, Nelson Mandela, Joshua in the Bible)

After all the tasks have been complete, ask each group to summarize their results to the larger group. If possible, write out group 1, 3 and 5's answers on one large sheet of paper, and group 2, 4 and 6's answers on another.

Have everyone return to their groups. Ask them to compare the two answer sheets and come up with some differing factors between the two. When a group has come up with their answer, have them raise their hands. When they do so, give them the passage 1 Corinthians 13:1-8. Based on this passage, have them answer the question, "What does this passage suggest is the key difference between the two lists? (Does it differ from your original answer?)" Each group should have a spokesperson to report their discoveries to the larger group. When groups report back, note the similarities in their answers.

Have a student read 1 Corinthians 13 in its entirety. As they are reading, add the milkshake ingredients into the blender. When the student is finished reading,

**Prompt:** Faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love. When you think about what defines our faith, it is knowledge, wisdom, and conviction, but the difference between the examples we just read out is the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of them are examples of pursuing these things out of faith, hope, and love. And the greatest of these reasons why we pursue

them is in the very identity of who God is (1 John 4:8). These three things are what bind our faith together, just as this blender binds all these ingredients together to make something wonderful and delicious. (**Leader's note:** If you haven't already, you should hit the BLEND button.)

**Prompt:** This is probably the best definition of love that you will ever come across. This is what Jesus is calling us to: a life of love. I can stand up here and talk all I want about the things I know about God, faith, and the bible, but if I'm not doing this out of love, it means nothing. Love transforms us from the inside out. God showed us the greatest act of love by dying for us on the cross, and when that knowledge, wisdom, and belief come together within us, it becomes reflected in our very identity. We are called by God not just to convey knowledge of that belief but to embrace our faith out of love. Knowledge will pass away (end of 1 Corinthians 13:8), but love will always remain.

### **Consolidate/Debrief**

Have students return to their original groups. (**Leader's note:** If groups are larger than 6 people, then divide those groups in half.) Ask the following questions:

1. What does faith, hope, and love look like in your life? How do you allow it to transform you from the inside out?
2. How does our faith become sturdier if we allow God's love to fill us?
3. Jesus calls us to love our neighbours. How can we demonstrate Jesus' love to others?

Afterwards, suggest they pray together in groups that they would live out Jesus' call.

(**Leader's note:** You may choose to gather the larger group and end in prayer.)

You may want to end this lesson, and this module by serving milkshakes to the group or having a party with ice cream sundaes...with, or without spoons!

# LOVING THE STORY

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Ephesians 3:16-19

A Bible itself, just like any other book, is merely a book filled with words. So how does a book filled with words allow us to grow closer to God, and explore our faith in Him? It takes the realization that God's story doesn't just take place within a book. It is, in fact, happening all around us, and we are interacting with His story every moment of our lives. And we, as growing Christians, must learn to embrace it.

As students become more mature, they transition from a faith that is primarily external (i.e. family based) to one that is primarily internal (i.e. individual), and it is crucial that, in this time of transition, they embrace the uniqueness of their own faith journey in order to become equipped and empowered with the knowledge, wisdom, and conviction that God has to offer. The Bible...God's story...provides us with these three things in ways that we can incorporate into our lives.

In this module, students will explore these three tools that scripture provides, and learn to interpret them and put them into use.

**Lesson 1: Seek** will allow students to become more comfortable with asking questions about their faith. It is crucial that they understand that through asking, they obtain the knowledge and wisdom that will empower them to embrace and appreciate their faith

**Lesson 2: Know** illustrates the difference between knowledge and wisdom, and will help them to understand the importance of both, as they continue to uncover the idea of faith.

**Lesson 3: Believe** should inspire the students to be bold about their faith, as illustrated in Daniel 3. When knowledge and wisdom are willingly obtained from God, and we choose to use them to empower our faith, our belief in Him becomes reinforced through conviction.

**Lesson 4: Integrate/Emulate** ties the three key aspects (knowledge, wisdom, conviction) together, and boldly states the reason Christians choose to follow God: out of love. Students will learn to embrace the love that God has shown us first, and learn to show love to others in a kind and compassionate way.