

H.O.P.E. Cycle One: Sin and Separation

How to have a student-led group:

1. A student opens and a student closes meeting in prayer
2. A student explains the purpose of First Priority
3. Students read verses and questions for the week

Topic: Sin and Separation

The purpose of this cycle is to help us understand that sin separates us from God. Sin is not as much about our behavior (bad choices) as it is about our hearts (seeking God). But, by putting our faith in Jesus, our sins are forgiven and we are reconnected to God.

Memory verse: “Christ can save those who come to God through him. Christ can do this forever, because he always lives and is ready to help people when they come before God.” **Hebrews 7:25 (ERV)**

First Meeting:

For your first group meeting, please follow these steps:

- 1) Welcome others as they come in
- 2) Open the meeting in prayer and then explain what First Priority is (a Christian group, but you don't have to be a Christian to attend; it's a safe place to seek and share God)
- 3) Start with a quick icebreaker so everyone will feel comfortable (idea: go around the room and ask everyone to say their favorite movie/television show as a child)
- 4) Explain what to expect at the meetings each week [ask everyone to download the First Priority phone app]
- 5) Assign speakers/readers for HELP and OVERCOME Weeks [get copies of the lesson made for everyone]
- 6) Have someone agree to report attendance and someone to send a meeting reminder to the group
- 7) Close in prayer

HELP Week (second meeting)

God created Adam and Eve and they lived in the Garden of Eden where they oversaw the land and animals. Read the following verses to learn about the “fall of man”: ²The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³ but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’” ⁶When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. ⁸ Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?” ¹⁰ He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.” ¹¹ And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?” ¹² The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.” ¹³ Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

Genesis 3:2-3; 6-13 (NIV)

- 1) Why did God warn Adam and Eve not to eat from the tree of good and evil?
- 2) What were Adam and Eve doing when God called to them? Why were they ashamed?
- 3) When God convicted them of their sin, Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the serpent. This is a good example of how we deflect the blame when we sin against God. What are some ways you have done this? Explain.
- 4) What are some ways that we disobey or rebel against God? Example: being selfish
- 5) How does our separation from God affect us or make us feel? Example: lonely
- 6) **Read John 3:16-17:** “For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to be its judge, but to be its savior.”
Question: Who is the Son and how does this verse **HELP** you?

Read the Challenge to the group: Over the next week, pray for two friends who do not know Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

Week Two – OVERCOME (third meeting)

In week one, we talked about how we are separated from God because he is holy [one perfect in goodness and righteousness] and we are not. We also talked about how God provided a way back to him if we put our faith in Jesus.

1. Read this verse: “For it is by God’s grace that you have been saved. You receive it through faith. It was not *our plan* or our effort. It is God’s gift, *pure and simple*. You didn’t earn it, *not one of us did*, so don’t go around bragging *that you must have done something amazing*. Ephesians 2:8-9 (VOICE)
2. In the verse above, what does it mean that we cannot earn salvation?
3. Then how are we saved? What are we saved from?
4. Read this verse: “Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” John 14:6 (NIV)
5. How is Jesus the way to the Father (see previous verses)? What do you think about this?
6. Read this verse: “Christ can save those who come to God through him. Christ can do this forever, because he always lives and is ready to help people when they come before God.” **Hebrews 7:25(ERV)** Question: How does this verse make you feel (thankful, relieved, confused, etc.)? Why?

Read the Challenge to the group: We are going to pray for each other today [popcorn prayer, if time allows, or take prayer requests].

Week Three - PREPARE

As you PREPARE for ENGAGE Week consider the following:

- 1) **Read Acts 3:19:** “Now repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away.” The idea of repentance means to turn back to God [to follow Him and not your own selfish desires] AND to feel sorry for your rebellion against God [remorse].
- 2) Are you currently moving towards God or away? If away, please explain why
- 3) **Romans 3:23:** “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” and **Daniel 9:9 (NIV):** “The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him”
- 4) How do these verses encourage you today?
- 5) PREPARE for ENGAGE Week by asking for volunteers to:
 - A. Share his or her testimony [when and how they became a follower of Jesus Christ, and how it has affected them]
 - B. Read the salvation prayer and invitation (see below)
 - C. Be greeters at the door
 - D. Hand out the Response Cards [found on the FP website under the “Student” tab]
 - E. Report attendance for this week and next week
 - F. Be on the follow-up team (see below)
 - G. End the meeting in prayer

Read the Challenge to the group: Invite at least one friend to next week’s Engage Week meeting.

Week Four - ENGAGE

Use your faith story to **ENGAGE** your campus for Christ; share the gospel message and invitation; follow up with first time decisions and those with questions; invite everyone back to HELP Week.

Read the Challenge to the group: Invite a friend to your church or youth group this week.

Gospel Message (please read this out loud to your group):

Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." The Bible tells us that there is no one who is innocent.

Romans 5:8 says, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Jesus' resurrection proves that God accepted Jesus' death as the payment for our sins.

Romans 10:13 "for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Salvation, the forgiveness of sins, is available to anyone who will trust in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Romans 5:1 tells us, "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." The Bible says that if we believe in Jesus, we will have peace with God. We can be reconnected to him.

[hand out Student Response Cards here]

Invitation/Prayer (ask students to close their eyes and bow their heads):

If this message is speaking to you today, and you want to trust in Jesus as your Savior then pray this simple prayer to yourself: Dear Lord, I admit that I have sinned and this has separated me from you. But, I believe that through you I can be forgiven. Today, I pray that you will come into my life and help me to trust in you. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Follow-up Plan:

Once you've shared the gospel and invitation, collect the Student Response Cards (can be downloaded from the First Priority website) and then follow these steps:

1. Student leaders commit to praying for and contacting any student who has made a decision for Christ and/or has questions.
2. When contacting these students, student leaders will want to:
 - Answer any questions they may have
 - Offer to pray for them
 - Invite them to the next week's HELP Week meeting
 - Invite them to your church, if they don't have one
3. Return all Student Response cards to the group president or teachers sponsor (Response cards or information on the cards must never be given to an outside adult or organization/ church)