

H.O.P.E CYCLE 6: SUFFERING and SADNESS

How to have a student-led club:

A student opens and closes meetings in prayer

A student explains the purpose of First Priority

Students read verses and questions for the week

A student shares his/her faith story and the gospel message on Engage Week

Memory Verse: “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” Romans 8:28 (NIV)

Week One: HELP

During Jesus’ 33 years on earth, some of his best friends were Mary, Martha and Lazarus. At one point, Lazarus becomes sick. They send Jesus a message pleading for him to come because they knew HE loved Lazarus. But Jesus does something difficult for them to understand: Jesus waits to go and Lazarus dies. Eventually, Jesus goes to Mary and Martha, and calls Lazarus to come out of the tomb (he had been dead for 4 days). Even though we may not always understand the circumstances surrounding suffering and sadness, we can trust that Jesus is with us, and HE loves us deeply.

1) Read **John 11:1-6 (ESV)**: “Here was a man named Lazarus who was sick. He lived in the town of Bethany, where Mary and her sister Martha lived. ²(Mary is the same woman who put perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) Mary’s brother was Lazarus, the man who was now sick. ³So Mary and Martha sent someone to tell Jesus, “Lord, your dear friend Lazarus is sick.”⁴When Jesus heard this he said, “The end of this sickness will not be death. No, this sickness is for the glory of God. This has happened to bring glory to the Son of God.” ⁵Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. ⁶So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days.” **Question:** According to these verses, why did Jesus wait to go to Mary and Martha? Have you experienced a time when you had to wait for God to act? Please share.

2) Read **John 11:34-37 (AMP)**: “⁴and said, “Where have you laid him?” They said, “Lord, come and see.” ³⁵Jesus wept. ³⁶So the Jews were saying, “See how He loved him [as a close friend]!” ³⁷But some of them said, “Could not this Man, who opened the blind man’s eyes, have kept this man from dying?” **Question:** According to this verse and the precious one, why do you think Jesus wept (cried) about Lazarus dying?

3) Read **Romans 8:28 (AMP)**:²⁸And we know [with great confidence] that God [who is deeply concerned about us] causes all things to work together [as a plan] for good for those who love God, to those who are called according to His plan *and* purpose.” **Question:** How does God cause all things to work together (explain this in a way that everyone understands)?

4) These verses remind us that Jesus cares for those that he loves, and is with us when we are suffering or sad. Are you or someone you know suffering right now? Explain (without mentioning names).

5) Read **Psalms 56:8-9 (ESV)**: You know I am very upset. You know how much I have cried. Surely you have kept an account of all my tears. ⁹I know that when I call for help, my enemies will turn and run. I know that because God is with me! **Question:** Knowing that God personally collects every tear you cry, how does this **HELP** you today?

Challenge: Pray for two friends who do not know Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

Week Two: OVERCOME

1) In the following verses, Jesus is about to be arrested and eventually crucified on a cross. His followers do not know this is going to happen, but Jesus does. Read **Matthew 26:36-39 (ESV)**: “Then Jesus went with his followers to a place called Gethsemane. He said to them, “Sit here while I go there and pray.” ³⁷He told Peter and the two sons of Zebedee to come with him. Then he began to be very sad and troubled. ³⁸Jesus said to Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, “My heart is so heavy with grief, I feel as if I am dying. Wait here and stay awake with me.” ³⁹Then Jesus went on a little farther away from them. He fell to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, don’t make me drink from this cup. But do what you want, not what I want.” **Question:** Why is Jesus in so much emotional pain and how did he respond to it? Are you going through a hard time and in need of prayer? Please share.

2) Read **Hebrews 4:15-16 (AMP)**: "For we do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize *and* understand our weaknesses *and* temptations, but One who has been tempted [knowing exactly how it feels to be human] in every respect as *we are, yet* without [committing any] sin. ¹⁶Therefore let us [with privilege] approach the throne of grace [that is, the throne of God's gracious favor] with confidence *and* without fear, so that we may receive mercy [for our failures] and find [His amazing] grace to help in time of need [an appropriate blessing, coming just at the right moment]. **Question:** Jesus understands our suffering because he has suffered, physically and emotionally. How does knowing this encourage you?

3) **2 Corinthians 1:3-4 (NIV)**: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, ⁴who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God tells us that God comforts us in our troubles, so that we can comfort others." **Question:** What are some ways that God comforts us when we are struggling?

4) Read **Isaiah 41:10**: "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." **Question:** How does this verse give you comfort and help you **OVERCOME** times of suffering, sadness or depression?

5) Please spend the next few minutes praying together. You can gather in a circle, do popcorn prayer, or collect prayer requests.

Week Three: PREPARE

1) Read **Romans 5:3-5 (ESV)**: "And we are also happy with the troubles we have. Why are we happy with troubles? Because we know that these troubles make us more patient. ⁴And this patience is proof that we are strong. And this proof gives us hope. ⁵And this hope will never disappoint us. We know this because God has poured out his love to fill our hearts through the Holy Spirit he gave us. tells us that suffering teaches us perseverance and strengthens our faith." **Question:** How is this possible? Describe how God has strengthened your faith in times of difficulty.

2) Read **Isaiah 55:8-9 (ESV)**: The LORD says, "My thoughts are not like yours. Your ways are not like mine. ⁹Just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways, and my thoughts are higher than your thoughts." **Question:** Is it a relief to know that God's thoughts and ways are not like yours, or does this concern you?

3) In times of suffering, we can't see all that God sees, but we can trust that He's working behind the scenes for us. How does knowing that God is good and HE is in control, help you?

4) Read **Revelation 21:4 (KJV)**: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." **Question:** How does this Scripture encourage you today?

5) **Prepare** for Engage Week by asking a student to share his/her faith story next week, a student (or two) to share the gospel message and invitation (found below), and a student to open and close the meeting in prayer next week.

Challenge: Invite two friends 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 (see below), and report attendance on the app. Please remember to use the Response Cards which can be downloaded from www.firstprioritytampa.org under the Students tab.

Challenge: 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.

[Pass 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)

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