

E.P.I.C. Cycle 2: Finding Peace with God Leader's Guide

Beginning of Meeting:

1. Welcome everyone and open in prayer
2. Explain what First Priority is (a Christian group, but you do not have to be a Christian to attend)
3. Start with a quick icebreaker
4. Ask everyone to download the First Priority of Tampa Bay phone app
5. Assign someone to report weekly attendance & someone to send meeting reminders to the group
6. Close in prayer

Topic: The purpose of this cycle is to understand that we were created by God to be in constant connection with Him, but our sin (bad/selfish decisions) has separated us from Him. The only way back to God is through His son, Jesus. When we place our faith and trust in Jesus, we are reconnected to God, and “saved” from eternal separation from God.

Memory Verse: “Therefore, since we have been made right in God’s sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us.” **Romans 5:1** [read this verse out at the beginning of each meeting and encourage students to memorize it]

Week 1: EQUIP

Before starting this week’s lesson, read the topic explanation above.

1. Read **Ephesians 2:8-9**: “God saved you through faith as an act of kindness. You had nothing to do with it. Being saved is a gift from God. ⁹ It’s not the result of anything you’ve done, so no one can brag about it.”

Question:

- A. How are the above verses related to the saying “you are saved by grace”? [grace is a free gift that we isn’t deserved- just like our salvation is a gift from God that we do not deserve and cannot earn]
2. In **Acts 2:21** we read: “But everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.” And **Titus 2:11-12** reads: “That is the way we should live, because God’s grace has come. That grace can save everyone. ¹² It teaches us not to live against God and not to do the bad things the world wants to do. It teaches us to live on earth now in a wise and right way- a way that shows true devotion to God.”

Questions:

- A. According to these verses, who is able to call on God for salvation? [anyone and everyone]
- B. What does it mean to live *against* God in verse 12 (give examples of living against God)? [all selfish desires and actions]
- C. Why is eternal separation from God so terrible? [we were created to know God and to be connected to Him, so being apart from God and His goodness- and with no way back to Him is almost unfathomable]
- D. Is this the first time you have heard about grace and salvation? If yes, please explain how this has affected you.

Challenge: Pray for a friend who needs to know Jesus.

WEEK 2: PREPARE

Last week, we talked about how we were created by God to be in constant connection with Him, but our sin (bad/selfish decisions) has separated us from Him. The only way back to God is through His son, Jesus. When we place our faith and trust in Jesus, we are reconnected to God, and “saved” from eternal separation from God. This week, we will talk about having peace with God and why this is important.

1. In **Romans 5:10** we read: “And since, when we were his enemies, we were brought back to God by the death of his Son, what blessings he must have for us now that we are his friends and he is living within us!”

Questions:

- A. How does this verse describe us before we are “brought back to God by Jesus”? [as enemies of God]
- B. Have you heard this before? If no, how does this make you feel?

2. In **Psalm 29:11** says: “The LORD gives his people strength. The LORD blesses them with peace”.

Questions:

- A. What is the definition of peace and what is the opposite of peace? [peace with God means being connected to Him and aligned with His will; the opposite of this is being at war with God and His will]
- B. Why would we want peace with God? [We are created to know and be known by God, therefore, peace with Him is our ultimate need]
- C. How does understanding and having peace with God **PREPARE** us to stand against the inevitable struggles in life?

3. Spend the remainder of the meeting preparing for next week’s meeting. This includes asking students to volunteer for the following responsibilities (be sure to get students’ contact info so you can prepare and remind them):

- Share his or her faith story [how Jesus has affected their life]

- Be greeters at the door
- Report attendance and decisions
- Read the salvation prayer and invitation (see below)
- Hand out the Response Cards [found on the FP website under the “Student” tab]
- Be on the follow-up team (see below)
- Open and close the meeting in prayer

Challenge: Invite at least two friends to next week's INVITE meeting.

Week 3: INVITE

This is the week when a student shares a faith story and another reads the invitation and prayer. Please follow the following steps at the beginning of the meeting:

Welcome everyone and open in prayer

- Explain what First Priority is (a Christian group, but you do not have to be a Christian to attend)
- A student shares their faith story
- A student reads the gospel and invitation
- Hand out and collect the Student Response Cards (found on the FP website)
- Report attendance & decisions, send meeting reminders to the group
- Close in prayer

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

And now we will pray. This is not a magical prayer. It is simply an opportunity to respond to the good news that Jesus died on the cross as payment for our sins and three days later rose from the dead, proving that God accepted Jesus' death as payment

(Please ask students to bow their heads and close their eyes)

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 been sinful, which means that I seek my own selfish desires and this has separated me from you. But I believe that through faith in Jesus, I can be forgiven and reconnected to God. So 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 have 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 decided to follow Christ and/or has questions.

B. Why are church meetings necessary for encouraging and warning others, and holding firmly to the word of life? [provides accountability, encouragement, exhortation, and growth]

C. If we are all in a “warped and crooked generation” why does shining among others “like stars in the sky” matter? [provides hope to a lost and dying world]

3. Spend the last few minutes sharing about your youth groups/churches and invite your friends who are not connected to one.

Challenge: Invite a friend to next week’s EQUIP meeting.