

## EPIC Cycle 5: Believing What We Cannot See

### How to have a student-led club:

- Opens and closes meetings in prayer
- Explain what First Priority is [First Priority is a Christian group, but you do not have to be a Christian to attend]
- Ask everyone to download the First Priority of Tampa Bay phone app
- Assign someone to report weekly attendance via the phone app
- Assign someone to send weekly meeting reminders

**This month's topic:** Faith is believing in something you cannot see. While many people may say that they do not believe in the unseen, this is simply not true. After all, we all believe in things we cannot see with the naked eye. For example: you cannot see oxygen or gravity, but we know they exist because we experience them. For Christians, the same is true with God. We may not be able to SEE him, but we can experience Him.

**Memory Verse:** "faith is the assurance (title deed, confirmation) of things hoped for (divinely guaranteed), and the evidence of things not seen [the conviction of their reality—faith comprehends as fact what cannot be experienced by the physical senses]". **Hebrews 11:1**

### Week 1: Equip

In this week's lesson, we will look at verses that equip us to know that God is real.

1. In **Romans 1:20** it reads: "for ever since the creation of the world His [God] invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through His workmanship [all His creation, the wonderful things that He has made], so that they [who fail to believe and trust in Him] are without excuse and without defense."

#### Questions:

A. What are some ways that we see God's existence when we look around us (nature, creation, etc.) and how does this provide proof of Him being real?

B. Why does proof of His existence in creation mean that we are without an excuse?

2. **Romans 2:14-15** reads: For example, whenever people who don't possess the law as their birthright commit sin, it still confirms that a "law" is present in their conscience. For when they instinctively do what the law requires, that becomes a "law" to govern them, even though they don't have Mosaic law. <sup>15</sup>It demonstrates that the requirements of the law are woven into their hearts. They know what is right and wrong, for their conscience validates this "law" in their heart. Their thoughts correct them in one instance and commend them in another"

#### Question:

A. This verse says that God's law is written in everyone's heart. How would you explain this to someone who is not a Christian?

3. In **Psalm 86:11** it reads: "teach me your way, Lord, that I may rely on your faithfulness; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name [with awe-inspired reverence and submissive wonder]"

**Questions:**

- A. How does having an undivided heart affect our faith?
- B. How does having an awe-inspired reverence affect how we see (experience) God?

**Challenge: Pray for a friend who needs to know that God is real.**

**Week 2: PREPARE**

Last week, we talked about how we can believe in God when we cannot see him in physical form. This week, we will talk about pride and how it impacts our ability to believe in and trust God. Because pride attributes to the "self" the glory and honor rightfully due to God, it is essentially rebellion against God. Therefore, it is important for us to understand the cause and effect of pride, and how to confront it.

1. Pride is destructive is because it hardens the heart and causes us to not seek God. In **Psalm 10:4** it says, "The wicked do not care about the LORD; in their pride they think that God doesn't matter." And In **Proverbs 16:18** it reads: "Pride leads to destruction [comes before a disaster]; a proud attitude brings ruin [pride comes before a fall]."

**Questions:**

- A. How does pride harden our hearts and why does this matter?
- B. How else does pride affect us? Give examples

2. In **Jeremiah 17:9**, it reads: "Nothing can hide its evil as well as the human mind [heart]. It can be very sick, and no one really understands it" and **2 Timothy 4:3** says: "The time will come when people will not listen to the true teaching. But people will find more and more teachers [preachers] who please them. They will find teachers who say what they want to hear."

**Questions:**

- A. Why is it so easy for us to make excuses about our bad and/or selfish behavior?
- B. Are we living in a time when we can "find teachers (people) who will say what we want to hear" and why is this a problem?
- C. How does trusting in God prepare us to receive and follow "true teaching"?

For the remainder of today's meeting, prepare for next week's **INVITE** meeting by:

- 1. Asking a student to prepare a faith story (how Jesus has affected their life) for next week.
- 2. Asking a student to prepare to share the gospel and/or invitation next week.

**Challenge: At the end of the meeting, gather in a circle and pray for each other.**

**Week 3: INVITE**

This week, a student shares a faith story and another the gospel and/or invitation. After the invitation, the Response Cards are passed out and collected, and then the leaders use the Follow Up Plan below.

Please follow these steps:

1. Welcome everyone and open in prayer
2. Explain First Priority and the purpose of today's meeting
3. Introduce the student sharing his/her faith story
4. After the faith story, a student reads the gospel and/or invitation (if you don't have time for both then read the invitation only)
5. Response cards are passed out to all students and then collected at the end of the meeting
6. A leader invites all guests to next week's First Priority meeting
7. A leader reports today's attendance and decision for Christ's on the First Priority phone app
8. A student closes in prayer

**Gospel Message (To be read out loud to the group):**

- Admit that you are a sinner. To "sin" means to make a bad choice out of selfish desires, and sin separates us from God because we are pursuing our own path aside from what God's perfect plan for us.
- Believe in Jesus and put your trust in Him. Christ's death on a cross was an act of selfless love. He took on the whole sins of humanity, making it possible for all people to be reunited with God.
- Confess Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. This means acknowledging that you want Him in your life. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." This means that we cannot be saved by being "good enough", but only through accepting Jesus as our Savior.

**Invitation/Prayer (ask students to 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 have sinned and this has separated me from you because you are a Holy God. But, your Word says that Jesus died for me, and his grace is extended to me so that I can be forgiven. Today, I pray that you will come into my life and be my LORD, helping me to trust in you and live in a way that is pleasing to 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:
  - Answer any questions they may have
  - Offer to pray for them
  - Invite them to the next week's CONNECT meeting
  - Invite them to your church, if they don't have one
3. Return all student response cards to the student leader or teacher (response cards or information on the cards must never be given to an outside adult or organization/church).

**Challenge: Invite two friends to next week's meeting.**

#### **Week 4: CONNECT**

We have been talking about how we can trust in someone we cannot see and how pride is a roadblock to faith. This week, we will talk about how to deal with pride.

1. In **Revelation 3:17** it reads: "For you say, I am rich; I have prospered and grown wealthy, and I am in need of nothing; and you do not realize and understand that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked." This verse speaks of material wealth, but it also refers to living in comfort and without need. Whether we realize it or not, as Americans we have more than most in the world.

#### **Question:**

A. What are some ways that our stuff keeps us from seeking or needing God?

2. In 1 **Corinthians 4:7** it reads: "What are you so puffed up about? What do you have that God hasn't given you? And if all you have is from God, why act as though you are so great, and as though you have accomplished something on your own?"

#### **Questions:**

A. What are some ways that you or others take credit for what God has given?

B. If no one is special or more important, than why does God give each of us different gifts and talents?

3. Another way to combat pride is to always be teachable, which includes being willing to accept advice. **Proverbs 11:2** reads: "When pride comes [boiling up with an arrogant attitude of self-importance], then come dishonor and shame, But with the humble [the teachable who have been chiseled by trial and who have learned to walk humbly with God] there is wisdom and soundness of mind.

#### **Questions:**

A. what does it mean in this verse to have "wisdom and soundness of mind"?

B. How does being humble help us to CONNECT with others?

4. Spend the remainder of the meeting talking about ways to invite new people to your First Priority group so that they can have a place to connect with others.

**Challenge: Invite your friends to your youth group and/or church this week.**