

Epic Cycle 9: What it Means to Stand in the Gap

How to have a student-led club:

- Open and close meetings in prayer
- Explain First Priority [First Priority is a Christian group, but you do not have to be a Christian to attend]
- Download the First Priority of Tampa Bay phone app
- Report weekly attendance via the phone app
- Send weekly meeting reminders

Memory Verse: "He [God] wants all people to be saved from the punishment of sin. He wants them to come to know the truth. ⁵There is one God. There is one Man standing between God and men [people]. That Man is Christ Jesus. ⁶He gave His life for all men so they could go free and not be held by the power of sin. God made this known to the world at the right time." **1**

Timothy 2:4-6

Topic: When we think of a gap, we usually think of a space between two things- for example, the gap between a sidewalk and grass. The problem with a gap is that if there isn't something bridging the space, things fall through and are lost. In the same way, there is space between people and God because He is holy and we are not. This is why Jesus is the bridge between God and us so that we are not separated from Him forever. In this cycle, we will talk about what it means to stand in the gap and why it matters.

Week 1: EQUIP

When Adam and Eve made the choice to sin against God and disobey Him, sin entered the world and affected all humans- separating all people from God. In Genesis, we read God's plan for providing a way back to Him through His son, Jesus.

1. In **1 Timothy 2:4-6**, we read "He [God] wants all people to be saved from the punishment of sin. He wants them to come to know the truth. ⁵There is one God. There is one Man standing between God and men [people]. That Man is Christ Jesus. ⁶He gave His life for all men so they could go free and not be held by the power of sin. God made this known to the world at the right time."

These verses give us an understanding of how Jesus "stands in the gap" between God and people, explaining why placing our faith and trust in Jesus is the only way back to God.

Questions:

- A. Why do we need to be reconnected to God and what happens if we are not?
- B. How is Jesus qualified to stand in the gap for us and why isn't anyone else qualified?

2. In **Hebrews 7:25**, we read: "Therefore He [Jesus] is able also to save forever (completely, perfectly, for eternity) those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to

intercede *and* intervene on their behalf [with God].” And **Isaiah 53:12** reads: “I [God] will do this because he [Jesus] gave his life for the people. He was considered a criminal, but the truth is, he carried away the sins of many. Now [Jesus] will stand before me [God] and speak for those who have sinned [all people].”

Questions:

- A. What does intercede or intercession mean and what is an example of this in modern times?
- B. Why does Jesus “speak for those who have sinned” and why is this important for us to know and understand?

3. **Romans 8:26** reads: “Also, the [Holy] Spirit helps us. We are very weak, but the [Holy] Spirit helps us with our weakness. We don’t know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit himself speaks to God for us. He begs God for us, speaking to him with feelings too deep for words.”

Questions:

- A. Why does this verse describe people as weak and how does this affect our relationship with God?
- B. How does this week’s lesson **EQUIP** you to trust that Jesus intercedes to God on your behalf?

Please read this prayer out loud to the group:

Dear Lord, please forgive me for sinning against you and wanting to seek after my own selfish desires. In my weakness, I know that I need you and I am trusting in Jesus to help me to follow and trust you. Please give me a desire to know you and tell others about you. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

Week 2: PREPARE

Last week, we talked about how Jesus stands in the gap between God and us as our savior and intercessor- speaking to God on our behalf. This week, we will talk about prayer, and how and why we are able to intercede on behalf of others.

1. **Colossians 1:9b** reads: “We have not stopped praying for you, asking [specifically] that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom [with insight into His purposes], and in understanding [of spiritual things]...”

Questions:

- A. How does this verse describe prayer to God?
- B. Why would we desire for others to have “insight into God’s purposes”?
- C. What, specifically, do you want others to pray on your behalf?

2. **James 5:16** reads: “So always tell each other the wrong things you have done. Then pray for each other. Do this so that God can heal you. Anyone who lives the way God wants can pray, and great things will happen.”

Questions:

- A. How does confessing our selfish desires to others before we pray help us (and others)?
- B. Why does prayer [for ourselves and others] act as a catalyst to God's healing?

3. **Matthew 5:44** reads: "But I tell you, love your enemies. Pray for those who treat you badly" and **Luke 6:28** reads: "bless those who curse you, and pray for those who mistreat you."

Questions:

- A. Why does God want us to pray for those who treat us badly?
- B. How is it possible to have love for those who mistrust us?
- C. Are you struggling to forgive someone who has hurt you (you do not need to share names or details, if your answer is yes, ask your group to pray for you)?

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

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

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

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
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 HELP Week 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: Pray for those who may a decision to follow Jesus today.

Week 4: CONNECT

Last week, we talked about standing in the gap for others by praying to God about and for them. This week, we will talk about how and why we should stand in the gap between two extremes. Here are two examples of extremes: God's holiness and our sinful nature; the perfection of Heaven and this fallen world.

1. **Exodus 13:3a,11** reads: Moses said to the [Israelites] people, “Remember this day. You were slaves in Egypt, but on this day the LORD used his great power and made you free. “The LORD will lead you into the land he promised to give you.”

These verses are not only about God freeing the Israelites from slavery under the Egyptians and eventually guiding them to promised land, it's also a picture of spiritual slavery: we are slaves to our selfish desires[sin], but Jesus died on the cross to set us free [to our sinful, selfish nature].

Questions:

- A. In these verses, how is Moses acting as an intercessory for the Israelites?
- B. How would you explain the two extremes of being a slave to our sinful desires and being free in Christ?

2. **Joshua 3: 14,15,16a,17** reads: "So when the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant went ahead of them. ¹⁵ Now the Jordan is at flood stage all during harvest. Yet as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water's edge, ¹⁶ the water from upstream stopped flowing. The priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD stopped in the middle of the Jordan and stood on dry ground, while all Israel passed by until the whole nation had completed the crossing on dry ground.

Question:

- A. How do these verses symbolize God's plan for redeeming believers to Him [hint: think of God being with them, and Jesus saving them from eternal separation from God]?
3. For the remainder of the meeting, please share information about your church's youth group meetings, and any upcoming activities or events.