


Epic Cycle 7: The Gate, Occult, and False Teachers

Beginning of 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)
- Ask everyone to download the First Priority of Tampa Bay phone app (scan QR code) 
- Report weekly attendance & send meeting reminders to the group
- Close in prayer



Topic: We live in a world that is full of confusion and we often worry about our future. Not being able to know the future can tempt us to look for ways to do so- including reading horoscopes, tarot cards, palms, using Ouija boards, witchcraft and other ways. In this month's lesson, we will talk about why these activities are dangerous and how to trust God with our future.

Memory Verse: "Every word of God proves true. He is a shield to all who come to him for protection"
Proverbs 30:5

Week 1: Equip Week

It is hard living in a world that is so unpredictable and not knowing what our future holds, which is why we often turn to "other worldly" things for answers. Fortunately, God has given us the Bible so we can know and trust Him, and avoid what is not from Him. In this week's lesson, we will look at the narrow gate that leads to God.

1. In **Matthew 24:6-8**, we read about how war and suffering are symptoms of a world separated from God: "You are going to hear the noise of battles close by and the news of battles far away; but do not be troubled. Such things must happen, but they do not mean that the end has come. Countries will fight each other; kingdoms will attack one another. There will be famines and earthquakes everywhere. All these things are like the first pains of childbirth." But in **1Corinthians 14:33** we read: "God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord's people."

Questions:

- A. Why does separation from God bring war and suffering?
- B. How is the world's chaos affecting you (please be honest and open)?

2. In **John 10:9**, we read: "So Jesus said again, "I assure you, I am the gate for the sheep [people]. All those who came before me were thieves and robbers. The sheep did not listen to them. I am the

gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved. They will be able to come in and go out. They will find everything they need.”

Side note: Jesus is the shepherd, believers are people, and “thieves” and “robbers” are false teachers.

Questions:

- A. How do we enter “through” Jesus to get to God?
- B. Why is Jesus the only one with the key to the gate?
- C. Do you believe this? If not, why?

3. In **Revelation 3:7** we read: “Here is a message from the one who is holy and true [Jesus], the one who holds the key of David. When he opens something, it cannot be closed. And when he closes something, it cannot be opened.”

Questions:

- A. Why is this verse comforting to those who put their faith and trust in Jesus?
- B. How does this week’s lesson EQUIP you to understand the way back to God?

Challenge: Please take time this week to read these Bible verses again and ask God to help you fully understand what they mean.

Week 2: Prepare Week

Last week, we talked about how we often turn to “other worldly” things for answers and this can be dangerous. Fortunately, God has given us the Bible so we can avoid anything that is not from Him. This week, we will talk about how the devil can deceive and mislead us.

1. In the Bible, there are many names for the devil (Serpent, Satan, Lucifer, etc.) and in **Ezekiel 28:17a**, we read that he was a beautiful angel before being cast out of heaven for his pride: “Your heart was filled with pride because of all your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor. Therefore, I have cast you down to the ground...and in **Isaiah 14:12a-13a**, we read: How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground—¹³ For you said to yourself, “I will ascend to heaven and rule the angels. I will take the highest throne...”

Questions:

- A. Why did the devil want to be like God?
- B. Why is pride so dangerous and how does it separate us from God (even believers)?
- C. How can we guard ourselves from pride?

2. In **Revelation 12:9** we read about the angels that followed the devil: “The huge dragon was thrown out—that ancient serpent, named the Devil, or Satan, that deceived the whole world. He was thrown down to earth, and all his angels with him”. These angels became what we know to be demons.

Question:

A. Why did these angels follow Satan and his selfish desires?

3. In **Leviticus 19:31** we read: “Don’t dabble in the occult or traffic with mediums; you’ll pollute your souls. I am GOD, your God” And **2 Corinthians 11:14b** reads: “Even Satan can disguise himself to look like an angel of light”!

Questions:

- A. What are modern ways that people participate in “the occult” and seek mediums (people who talk to the dead)?
- B. Why are these things dangerous?

4. In **1 Peter 5:8-9a**, we read: “Be alert, be on watch! Your enemy, the Devil, roams around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. ⁹Be firm in your faith and resist him...” and **James 4:7** reads: So then, submit yourselves to God. Resist the Devil, and he will run away from you.

Questions:

- A. What are ways that we can resist the devil and his spiritual attacks?
- B. How can we be alert and PREPARED for the devil’s schemes?

Action: Pray for God to show you if there is anything in your life that is not God-honoring (including activities), turn away from it, and ask God to forgive you.

Week 3: Invite Week

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 the concept of First Priority
- 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.
2. When contacting these students, student leaders will want to:
 - Answer any questions
 - Offer to pray for them
 - Invite them to the next week's CONNECT Week meeting
 - Invite them to your church
3. Return all Student Response cards to a student leader or teacher sponsor (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 CONNECT meeting.

Week 4: Connect Week

For the last few weeks, we have talked about how Jesus is the gate to God and the devil and his demons want to deceive us. This week, we will talk false teachers who mislead others.

1. In **1 John 4:1**, we read: My dear friends, do not believe all who claim to have the Spirit, but test them to find out if the spirit they have comes from God. For many false [teachers] have gone out everywhere” and in **Romans 16:17**, we read: “brothers and sisters, I want you to be very careful of those who cause arguments and hurt people’s faith by teaching things that are against what you learned. Stay away from them.”

Questions:

- A. Why is the Bible the best way to know if someone is a false teacher?
- B. Why should we stay away from a false teacher?

2. **Proverbs 2:11-13** reads: You will be given the sense to stay away from evil men who want you to be their partners in crime—men who turn from God’s ways to walk down dark and evil paths and

Questions:

- A. According to Proverbs 2:11-13, if we turn from God’s way, where are we turning?
 - B. How are we given the sense to stay away from evil men (hint: holy spirit)?
3. **Proverbs 30:5** reads: Every word of God proves true. He is a shield to all who come to him for protection and **Isaiah 41:10** reads: Don’t worry—I am with you. Don’t be afraid—I am your God. I

will make you strong and help you. I will support you with my right hand that brings victory.
Reminder: The Bible and Jesus are considered the word and God's right hand.

Questions:

- A. How does the Bible protect us?
- B. Have you heard these verses before? If not, talk about how they affect you?
- C. In light of today's lesson, why is it important for us to be connected to a local church and other believers?

Action: Spending time reading the Bible every day and ask God to help you trust in Jesus.

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