

EPIC Cycle 5: The Importance of being Willing and Steadfast in Our Faith

How to have a student-led club:

- 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)
- Start with a quick icebreaker (idea: ask everyone to say their favorite athlete/sport)
- Ask everyone to download the First Priority of Tampa Bay phone app
- Assign someone to report weekly attendance on the phone app
- Assign someone to send meeting reminders to the group
- Close in prayer

Topic: In this cycle, we will talk about why it's important to remain willing and steadfast in following the Lord- no matter the circumstances.

Memory Verse: "Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer." **Romans 12:2**

EQUIP- Week 1:

When we go through difficult or painful experiences, it is easy to ask "why me?", become angry and bitter, or to question God's goodness. In this week's group, we will talk about how we can experience joy no matter what we are going through.

1. The Bible tells us to be ready for temptation and in **Matthew 26:41** we read: "Keep *actively* watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

Questions:

- A. How would you explain that "the spirit is willing, but the body is weak" to a new or non-Christian?
- B. What is the role of the holy spirit when it comes to withstanding temptation?
- C. Why is it so easy to give in to temptation and what happens when we do?

2. **Psalm 51:12** reads: "Restore to me again the joy of your salvation and make me willing to obey you." And **2 Thessalonians 3:5** reads: "May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness *and* patience of Christ." These verses point to the fact that the Lord gives us the ability to remain willing and steadfast. It does not come from ourselves.

Questions:

- A. Why is David asking God to make him willing to obey? Why can't David do this on his own?
- B. How does God "direct our hearts" and why is this important?

3. **Psalm 16:8** reads: "I have set the LORD continually before me; Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken."

Questions:

- A. What does it mean to be shaken (give examples)?
- B. How can we "set the Lord continually before" us- especially during difficult times?

4. The story of Job (pronounced Joe-bah) is found in the Old Testament and is about how Job was steadfast in his faith even though he suffered tremendous loss and pain. In **Job 2:3** we read: "Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you noticed my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him. He is a

good, faithful man. He respects God and refuses to do evil. He is still faithful, even though you asked me to let you destroy, without reason, everything he has."

Questions:

- A. Why should we remain steadfast in our faith even if we experience tremendous suffering?
- B. What are some qualities of God's character for us to remember and how will this **EQUIP** us to be steadfast when we are going difficult times?

Challenge: Write the names of a friend who may be going through a difficult time on a sticky note and place somewhere that you will see it and remember to pray for them (bathroom mirror, bedroom door, etc.).

PREPARE- Week 2:

Being prideful means that we have an exaggerated sense of self and a subtle side of pride is self-pity, which is often expressed in victimhood. It is the idea that we deserve better. This week, we will talk about pride and self-pity, which are rooted in sin and make it difficult for us to experience fellowship with God and others.

1. In **Proverbs 11:2** we read: "Proud and boastful people will be shamed, but wisdom stays with those who are modest and humble." And **Proverbs 22:4** reads: "The reward of humility [that is, having a realistic view of one's importance] and the [reverent, worshipful] fear of the LORD is riches, honor, and life."

Questions:

- A. How is wisdom connected to humility?
- B. Do you know someone who is prideful and arrogant? If yes, describe their attitude and how it affects others (without using names).
- C. Why does knowing who God is help us to have a realistic view of ourselves?

2. **Proverbs 12:15** reads: The way of the [arrogant] fool [who rejects God's wisdom] is right in his own eyes, But a wise *and* prudent man is he who listens to counsel."

Questions:

- A. How is asking for and listening to others' counsel an act of humility?
- B. How are you wise if you are asking others for their opinion/advice?

3. In **1Kings 19:3-4** in the Old Testament we read about Elijah, a prophet of God: "And Elijah was afraid and arose and ran for his life, and he came to Beersheba which belongs to Judah, and he left his servant there. But he himself traveled a day's journey into the wilderness, and he came and sat down under a juniper tree and asked [God] that he might die." In these verses, Elijah's fear leads him to feeling overwhelmed and sorry for himself.

Questions:

- A. How is Elijah's self-pity (feeling sorry for himself) related to a lack of faith?
- B. How does self-pity often become bitterness?
- C. How do we know if we are feeling sorry for ourselves and what can we do about it?

4. **1 Peter 5:8-9** reads: "Be sober [well balanced and self-disciplined], be alert *and* cautious at all times. That enemy of yours, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion [fiercely hungry], seeking someone to devour. But resist him, be firm in *your* faith [against his attack—rooted, established,

immovable], knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being experienced by your brothers and sisters throughout the world. [You do not suffer alone.]”

Questions:

A. What does it mean to be “rooted, established, immovable” against the devil's attacks and what happens if we are not?

B. How do these verses **PREPARE** you to stand against temptation, self-pity, and doubt?

5. Spend the rest of the meeting preparing for next week's meeting. Please make sure a student is prepared to share a testimony, the gospel and invitation, and students hand out the Response Cards (found on the First Priority website).

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

INVITE- Week 3:

A student should share his/her faith story and another the invitation [see below]. Please use the Student Response cards, which can be downloaded from the First Priority website. [www.firstprioritytampa.org]

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

If God is stirring your heart today to trust in Jesus as your Savior, then pray this simple prayer to yourself: Dear Lord, I admit that I am selfish and this separates me from you because you are holy. I believe that Jesus died on the cross and was raised from the dead 3 days later. This proved that you accepted his death as payment for my sin. Please come into my life and help me to trust in you. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

[Pass out Student Response Cards here]

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)

CONNECT- Week 4: In this cycle, we have talked about how to be willing and steadfast in the Lord, even when times are tough or we are full of fear.

1. In **Nehemiah 11:2** we read: "Now the leaders of the people lived in Jerusalem; but the rest of the people cast lots to bring one [person] out of ten to live in Jerusalem, the holy city, while nine-tenths *remained* in the *other* cities. And the people blessed all the men who volunteered to live in Jerusalem."

This is an Old Testament verse in the time of Nehemiah when the wall was rebuilt around Jerusalem (for protection). Those who volunteered to move back to Jerusalem were uprooting their lives and families. This was not an easy task and showed their willingness to follow God, no matter the circumstances.

Questions:

- A. Why is willingness such an important aspect of faith?
- B. How can we willingly follow God's plan even if it may include suffering or difficult circumstances?
- C. How do we know that God is good even when we are suffering and/or experiencing difficult circumstances?

2. In **James 1:2-4** we read: "Dear brothers and sisters, is your life full of difficulties and temptations? Then be happy [joy-filled], ³ for when the way is rough, your patience has a chance to grow. ⁴ So let it grow, and don't try to squirm out of your problems. For when your patience is finally in full bloom, then you will be ready for anything, strong in character, full and complete. And **Romans 12:2** reads: Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

Questions:

- A. How does patience grow during difficult times and make us "ready for anything"?
- B. How do we have a joy-filled mindset during tough times and suffering?
- C. How does prayer help us to be patient in difficult times

3. Spend the remainder of the meeting praying for each other and any difficult circumstances, trials, or temptations that you may be going through, and help students to **CONNECT** to a local church (if they are not already).

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

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