

Epic Cycle 10 Leaders' Guide  
Bridging the Gap & Being a New Creation

**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:** “Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results”. **James 5:16**

**Topic:** When we think of a bridge, we usually think of it over a body of water that allows us to cross over to the other side. In the same way, there is space between people and God because He is holy and we are not. Jesus is the bridge that connects us to God when we trust him as Savior.

**Week 1: EQUIP**

This week, we will talk about how Jesus is the bridge back to God.

1. In **1 Timothy 2:4-5**, we read “[God] wants all people to be saved from the punishment of sin. He wants them to come to know the truth. <sup>5</sup>There is one God. There is one Man standing between God and [people]. That Man is Christ Jesus. And in **John 10:30**, Jesus says: “I and the Father are one”.

**Question:**

A. Why is Jesus the only one who was able to provide a bridge back to God? No matter how good you are, you can never be good enough to be with God because He is perfectly holy (pure). Jesus is part of the Trinity, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is perfectly holy, which means he was worthy to bear our sins and pay the penalty that we owed to God.

2. In **Hebrews 7:25**, we read: “Therefore [Jesus] is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them”. And **Revelation 12:10** reads: Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God, day and night.

**Questions:**

A. What does intercede or intercession mean and what is an example of this in modern times? The word intercede means to go between or act on someone's behalf. A modern example is a defense attorney who pleads the case of someone charged with a crime.

B. Who is the "accuser"? The devil

C. Why do we need Jesus to intervene on our behalf? Because the devil is before God accusing us of our sins, but Jesus who is blameless before God, has the authority to speak on our behalf. If we are believers in Jesus, then his defense is always accepted by God.

**3. Romans 8:26** reads: "the Holy Spirit helps us with our daily problems and in our praying. For we don't even know what we should pray for nor how to pray as we should, but the Holy Spirit prays for us with such feeling that it cannot be expressed in words."

### Questions:

A. Why do we need help from the Holy Spirit with how we pray? As humans, we have a limited view of our lives, the world, and God's plans, and this limits how we pray. Jesus, though, is with God and sees everything, which means he is able to pray for us in ways that we cannot.

B. How does this week's lesson **EQUIP** you to trust that Jesus is with God, interceding on your behalf?

### Please read this prayer out loud to the group (to help them hear a prayer):

Dear Lord, thank you for being gracious, merciful and loving, and thank you for caring about me. Please give me a desire to know you, follow you, and care about others the way that you do. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## Week 2: PREPARE

Last week, we talked about how Jesus is a bridge back to God as our savior and intercessor-speaking to God on our behalf. This week, we will talk about the importance of prayer-praying for ourselves and for others.

1. Prayer is simply talking to God and sharing what is on your mind. A great way to start a prayer is by thanking Him (for being holy, loving, and willing to listen). In **Matthew 6:7**, we read: "When you pray, do not use a lot of meaningless words, as the pagans do, who think that their gods will hear them because their prayers are long.

### Questions:

A. What does this verse mean by "meaningless words"? It means to say a lot of words that are not from your heart- just to fill space.

B. Do you pray regularly? If no, please share why.

2. **Ephesians 6:18** reads: Pray all the time. Ask God for anything in line with the Holy Spirit's wishes. Plead with him, reminding him of your needs, and keep praying earnestly for all Christians everywhere. And, **Colossians 1:9b** reads: "we have kept on praying and asking God to help you understand what he wants you to do; asking him to make you wise about spiritual things."

**Questions:**

A. Based on these verses, who and what are we to pray to God for? We pray for ourselves and for all Christians.

B. Why would we pray for others to be "wise about spiritual things"? So that they will be able to understand the Bible, seek God's will, and stand strong against the devil's schemes.

2. **James 5:16** reads: "Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results".

**Questions:**

A. What two things does this verse say to do? Confess our sins to and pray for others.

B. How does confessing our sins help us? When we tell a trusted friend about our sin, it humbles us. It also weakens the hold that the sin has on us and allows us to grow closer to others.

3. **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? Praying to God [talking to Him] softens our hearts. The Holy Spirit is then able to help us to have compassion and to forgive others.

B. Why is it so hard to forgive those who hurt us? Because our selfishness keeps us from forgiving others and drives our need to get back at them.

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) and a student to share the gospel and/or invitation next week. Please remember to download and use the Response Cards from the [firstpriorityoftampabay.org](http://firstpriorityoftampabay.org) website under the Student Tab.

**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):**

**Romans 10:9-10 reads:** "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart, one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved."

**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 bow your head and pray this to God: Dear Lord, I admit my sin against you, I acknowledge that Jesus was raised from the dead, and I ask you to seal me with the Holy Spirit and help me to follow 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**

In this cycle, we have talked about how Jesus is a bridge back to God as our savior and the importance of prayer. This week, we will talk about how Jesus gives us a new life.

**1. Exodus 13:3a & 11** reads: "Moses said to the 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. But Jesus died on the cross to set us free from this selfish nature.

### **Question:**

A. Based on what you just read, how does Moses contrast where they were and where they were going? Moses reminds them that God has freed them from slavery and they would eventually be in their own land.

2. In **Galatians 5:24** we read: "And those who belong to Christ Jesus have put to death their human nature with all its passions and desires". And **2 Corinthians 5:17** reads: "This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!"

### **Questions:**

A. How would you explain being a slave to our sinful desires and being free in Christ? Before we accept Jesus Christ as our Savior, we are controlled by our selfish desires, but once we are saved, we are made new in Christ's image [and this is how God sees us] and no longer trapped in our selfish desires. We will still struggle daily with selfishness, but Holy Spirit that lives in us will give us the strength and desire to not give in to these temptations.

B. Why would we want to put to death our "human nature"? Because our selfish desires not only separate us from God, but they also cause harm to ourselves and others.

C. What are some ways that our selfish desires hurt others?

D. Have you heard **2 Corinthians 5:17** before? If not, how does this verse help you to CONNECT to God through faith in Jesus?

3. For the remainder of the meeting, please share information about your church's youth group meetings, and any upcoming activities or events.

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

**Spring 2023**