

EPIC Cycle 9 Leader's Guide

Finding Your Identity and Purpose

How to Have a Student-Led Meeting:

- Welcome everyone and open in prayer
- Explain First Priority (a Christian group, but you don't have to be a Christian to attend)
- Read the memory verse, questions and challenges
- A student reports weekly attendance on FPTB phone app
- A student sends meeting reminders to the group
- Close in prayer

Memory Verse: "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful; I know that full well. Psalm **139:14**

Week 1-Equip

This week we will talk about identity, which is often defined as our sense of self. In this context, we will read and discuss verses about why God created us.

1. In **Genesis 2:7**, we read: "Then the Lord God made man from the dust of the ground. And He breathed into his nose the breath of life. Man became a living being" and **Genesis 1:27**, we read: "And God made man [people] in His own likeness. In the likeness of God, He made him. He made both male and female."

Questions:

- A. What is the significance of God breathing life into Adam? (God is the source of life, it is His breath in our lungs)
- B. Have you read these verses before? If no, what are your thoughts?

2. In **Isaiah 64:8**, we read: "Still, Eternal One, you are our Father. We are just clay, and You are the potter. We are the product of Your *creative* action, shaped and formed *into something of worth*" and **Psalm 139:13,15-16** reads: "You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit them together in my mother's womb. You were there while I was being formed in utter seclusion! You saw me before I was born and scheduled each day of my life before I began to breathe. Every day was recorded in your book!

Questions:

- A. What does it mean that God is the potter and you are His clay? (It means that He is intimately involved in our lives, molding and shaping us to be Jesus)
- B. Why is it important for us to know that God formed EACH of us and He knows the number of days that we will live? (It reminds us that He cares about EVERY person; it also tells us that God knows everything, even the day that we will die)
- C. Did you know that God "knit you together" and you are important to Him? If no, talk about how these verses impact you. (Help others to fully process this verse)

3. In **Leviticus 16:12**, we learn why God created people: "I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be my people" and **Micah 6:8** reads: "He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Questions:

- A. Why would God want to walk with us [people]? (God is love and He wants to share this love with us)
- B. Why does God want us to walk "humbly" with Him? (When we are humble- not arrogant or full of ourselves- we can fully trust God and allow Him to lead us through our lives)
- C. How does this week's lesson **EQUIP** you to believe the memory verse- "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful; I know that full well"?

Action: If you are struggling to believe that God made you in His image and for a purpose, memorize this week's verses and ask God to increase your faith.

Challenge: Write the memory verse on a sticky note and post it on your wall or mirror.

Week 2-Prepare

Last week, we talked about how God created us in His image and wants to be close to us. This week, we will talk about how we change when we become believers in Jesus.

1. In **Colossians 2:9-10a**, we read: "I say this because all of God lives in Christ fully, even in his life on earth. And because you belong to Christ you are complete, having everything you need" and **Galatians 2:20** reads: "I have been crucified with Christ: and I myself no longer live, but Christ lives in me. And the real life I now have within this body is a result of my trusting in the Son of God [Jesus], who loved me and gave himself for me.

Questions:

- A. What is God's relationship with Jesus and why does this matter? (God is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit- Jesus is the distinct personhood of God)
- B. How is it possible for Jesus to live in us? (When we become believers, Jesus lives in us as the Holy Spirit- a distinct aspect of God that also includes Jesus)

Side note: God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are called the Trinity and are distinct aspects of God with defined roles.

2. In **1 Corinthians 5:17**, we read: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come" and **Ephesians 4:22-24** reads: "Put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness."

Questions:

- A. What does the first verse say about a new creation and why is this important? (When we become believers, we are no longer dead in our sins; we are completely forgiven and the Holy Spirit lives in us.
- B. What does the second verse say about our "former manner of life" and how does this change when we follow Jesus? (Before we are believers we are stuck in our selfish ways, but when we become believers and the Holy Spirit lives in us, our sins are forgiven and we have control over our sinful desires).

- C. How do we put off our "old self"? (By trusting in Jesus, and relying on the Holy Spirit to guide us and help us have control over our sinful desires; in this way, we are moving towards God and not away).
- D. How does this week's lesson **PREPARE** you to share your faith with others?

3. 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 at least two new friends to attend next week's INVITE meeting.

Week 3-Invite

This week, a student should share a story of how God is moving in their lives, and another should share the gospel message and invitation (SEE BELOW). Please remember to use the Response Cards [found on the First Priority of Tampa Bay website under the Students tab], and then report attendance/decisions for Christ on the First Priority of Tampa Bay phone app.

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

- Admit that you are a sinner. To "sin" means to make a bad choice, and sin separates us from God.
- Believe in Jesus and put your trust in Him. Christ's death on a cross two thousand years ago was an act of selfless love. He took on the whole sins of humanity, making it possible for all people to encounter God.
- Confess Christ Jesus as your Lord and Savior. This means acknowledging that you want Him in your life.

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. In your word it 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 and help 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 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 student leader or teacher (Response cards or information on the cards must never be given to an outside adult or organization/ church)

Challenge: Follow up with your friends who attended today's meeting and ask how you can pray for them.

WEEK 4-Connect

In this cycle, we have talked about why God created us and how we become a new creation when we put our trust and faith in Jesus. This week, we will talk about God's purpose for us.

1. **Matthew 22:36-40**, reads: Jesus answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' This is the first and most important command. And the second command is like the first: 'Love your neighbor the same as you love yourself.'

Questions:

- Based on these verses, what is God's plan for us? (Love God completely and love others well)
- Why is loving God the first commandment? (If we put God first and love him fully then His goodness and love will flow THROUGH us)
- What happens if we aren't loving God with our heart, soul, and mind? (Then we are moving away from Him and putting something or someone else in His place)

2. In **Ephesians 2:10**, we read: "God has made us what we are. In Christ Jesus, God made us new people so that we would spend our lives doing the good things he had already planned for us to do and **John 15:8** reads: Your abundant growth and your faithfulness as My followers will bring glory to the Father [God].

Questions:

- Why do we need to be new creation to do the good things that God has planned for us? (If we are acting in our flesh and not in the Holy Spirit, our motives are selfish/self-focused; even if our actions benefit someone else, it is still for selfish means)
- How does our growth and faithfulness bring glory to God? (As we grow in our faith and become more like Jesus, we reflect God's love and selflessness, and this brings God glory and honor)

3. In **Mark 16:15**, we read: Jesus said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation" and **1 Peter 3:15** reads: "But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect"...

Questions:

- A. How are these verses related to our purpose as believers in Jesus? (As believers, we are to tell others about Jesus, how he has changed us and our lives)
- B. Do you know someone who reflects God's love and is living out God's purposes in their lives? If yes, please give examples of how.
- C. How does this week's lesson help you CONNECT to God's purposes in your life?

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

Spring 2023