

THE CONVERSATION with OUTCASTS

PREPARE WEEK

Purpose:

Empower students to share their faith story.

Preparation:

- Give student speaker a Leader Guide for Encounter Week. (Equip them for success.)
- Be ready to help students with their cardboard testimonies.

Supplies:

- Cardboard Testimony Card and Pens
- Leader Guides for Encounter Week

LEADER SIGN UP

If there are weeks that you do not have people to lead or serve, this is the time to sign them up.

RANDOM QUESTION

[All Adults] What is your favorite pizza topping?

GET CONNECTED

[Mentor] Before we jump in, let's use our Get Connected time to think about who we can invite to First Priority next week. There are people all over our school who could really use a place like this. Somewhere to feel seen and heard. So, who's someone you can bring with you next week? (Allow students to respond.) Let's welcome our student host for today! [insert name]

WELCOME & OPEN PRAYER

[Host] Hey everyone, welcome to First Priority! We're really glad you're here. If this is your first time, you picked a great day to join us. We've been in a series about how to see and reach people who feel overlooked, and today [insert name] is going to share how looking up can change how someone feels. Let's take a moment to pray as we get started.

Sample prayer: God, thank You for bringing us here today. Please open our eyes to the people around us who need to be seen and loved. Help us learn to notice others the way You do. Give [insert name] the words to share and give us open hearts to listen. In Jesus' name, amen.

THE CONVERSATION

[Speaker] Over the last few weeks, we have been challenged to invite those around us who don't seem to fit in and who feel unseen to join us here at First Priority and to share our relationship with Jesus with them. Would anyone like to share how that is going? (Allow students to respond and share your experience.)

I know a lot of us don't look up as we walk through the crowded halls. We're just trying to get to the next class, but when we do that, we miss the opportunities that God might be putting right in front of us. There are people all around us who feel ashamed, unloved, or left out — and what they need is to be seen. But for that to happen, we have to look up.

It's not always easy to notice the people around us. Sometimes we're just tired, overwhelmed, or caught up in our own worries. Maybe we're afraid to make the first move. What if they don't want to talk? What if they ignore us? These are real thoughts that all of us have had. But Jesus calls us to see people the way He sees them — with compassion, love, and hope.

PREPARE WEEK

Jesus met a man named Zacchaeus who people avoided because he stole money and wasn't honest. Let's read what happened in Luke chapter 19 verses 2 through 10:

"And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd, he could not, because he was small in stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.' So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all grumbled, 'He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.' And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, 'Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.' And Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.'"

Did you catch that? Jesus looked up. He wasn't distracted or in a rush. He saw Zacchaeus, someone everyone else ignored, and He called him by name. Then Jesus chose to go to his house. Right into his world and Zacchaeus' whole life changed because of it. It's amazing what can happen if we look up.

Jesus shows us how powerful it is to really see someone. Are there people around us who need to be seen, who are hurting, or who just need to know they matter? When we look up and notice them, that's when we have the chance to share what Jesus has done for us.

FAITH STORY – CARDBOARD TESTIMONIES

[Speaker] Today we're going to practice telling our stories, just like Zacchaeus had a story, through something called "Cardboard Testimonies." We're going to use simple phrases to describe what Jesus has done in our lives.

You've probably seen signs on the street that tell someone's story in just a few words, like "Will work for food" or "Need help for my family." These are silent messages that tell you what someone is going through. (Have student leaders pass out Cardboard Testimony papers.)

On one side of the paper, write a short phrase describing what your life was like before you began a relationship with Jesus. On the other side, write how Jesus has changed your life. If you do not have a relationship with Jesus yet, just write what you're struggling with on side one and leave side two blank for now.

Here are a few examples:

- Side one – angry and bitter / Side two – learning to forgive because Jesus forgave me
- Side one – trapped in fear and worry / Side two – now walking in God's peace
- Side one – didn't think I mattered / Side two – found purpose and identity in Christ

(Take time to let students write and, if time allows, invite a few to share.)

Every one of us has a story worth sharing. When we hear what Jesus has done in someone else's life, it reminds us that we're not alone and it gives us hope. These cardboard testimonies aren't just words on paper; they're real evidence of how God moves in everyday lives. Remember that your story can inspire someone else to see Jesus more clearly.

(Have the student host come back up and give the CHALLENGE and PRAY.)

CHALLENGE & PRAY

[Host] Your challenge this week is to share your Cardboard Testimony with someone outside of this room. Maybe that's with a friend, a teacher, or even share it on your social media. Remember, your story matters because Jesus is the one who changed it. Let's pray! (PRAY)

continued

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Sample prayer: God, thank You for writing our stories and for changing our lives. Help us be bold enough to share what You've done in us with others. Use our testimonies to bring hope to someone who needs it. Give us eyes to look up and see the people You've placed in our path. In Jesus' name, amen.

GAME TIME - Optional

[Host & Mentor] (See the Game Time tab for options.)