

EPIC Cycle 4 – Leader’s Guide

How to have a student-led club:

- Opens and closes meetings in prayer
- Explain what First Priority is [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
- Assign someone to report weekly attendance via the phone app
- Assign someone to send weekly meeting reminders

This month’s topic: The Bible was written over a period of approximately 1,500 years by a number of authors. Although we see it as one book, it is actually a collection of many books and broken into two parts- the Old and the New Testament. Not only is the Bible an historic document, it is the basis of faith for Christians. In this cycle, we will talk about why it’s important to read the Bible.

Memory Verse:

“Such things were written in the Scriptures long ago to teach us. And the Scriptures give us hope and encouragement as we wait patiently for God’s promises to be fulfilled.”

Romans 15:4

WEEK 1: EQUIP Week

The Bible is commonly referred to as God’s Word, and we read it to know and understand God’s promises and plans. It also teaches us that God is good and worthy of our trust.

1. In **2 Timothy 3:16-17** it says: “All Scripture [what is written in the Bible] is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. ¹⁷ God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.

Questions:

A. What does verse 1 mean by “the Bible is inspired by God” and why should we believe this?

God divinely influenced the human authors of the Scriptures when they wrote the Word of God. We can trust that the Word is truth because God was directly inspiring their words.

B. How does the Bible teach us what is true and what is right and why does this matter?

We believe as Christians the facts are laid out in the Bible. We believe every answer to life and the truth on any topic is laid out in the Bible. Jesus was saying to us it is an indisputable fact that I am the Son of God. I am the way, the truth and the life.

C. Do you believe that the Bible is still relevant today, why or why not?

The Bible is "alive and active" and is one of the ways that God speaks to us and helps us to know Him. It is full of insight into the human condition that is just as true today as when it was written.

2. In **2 Samuel 22:31** it reads: "As for God, his way is perfect: The LORD's word is flawless; he shields all who take refuge in him." And **Proverbs 3:5-6** says "Trust in and rely confidently on the LORD with all your heart and do not rely on your own insight or understanding. ⁶In all your ways know and acknowledge and recognize [the Lord], and He will make your paths straight and smooth [removing obstacles that block your way].

Questions:

A. What do you think it means to "take refuge in God" and why is this important?

We can find protection in the Lord. He saves and rescues us from things that are not of Him, and He comforts us when we are suffering.

B. What does it mean "do not rely on your own insight or understanding"?

We live in a world full of sin. We are prone to wander. We have to rely on Jesus for guidance and wisdom.

C. Do you usually acknowledge and call on the Lord in your daily life? Why or why not?

Example: I pray to God every morning when I wake up; giving Him my day and plans.

3. In **Psalms 34: 8** reads: "Give the LORD a chance to show you how good HE is. Great blessings belong to those who depend on him!" and **Psalms 33:4** reads: "For the word of the LORD holds true, and we can trust everything he does."

Questions:

A. Why is it difficult to trust that God is always good?

One reason that we may struggle is thinking that God causes bad things to happen, when the Bible says that this isn't true. We live in a broken world with sinful people- this means that bad things will happen. Even though He may allow bad things to happen, He promises to work it out for the good of the believer. We must trust Him and His promises.

B. When was a time when you questioned if God is truly good? Please explain the circumstances.

C. If someone here is struggling to know if God is good, what would you say to them?

Open your eyes, heart and mind to see His goodness in your life and in nature; remember His faithfulness from the past; pray for Him to make it clear to you.

Challenge: Pray for a friend who needs to know that God is good.

WEEK 2: PREPARE Week

Last week, we talked about how the Bible helps us to know God and to trust Him. This week, we will talk about how the Bible helps us to know God's plan for our lives.

1. In **Psalm 119:105** it reads: "Your word [the Bible] is like a lamp that guides my steps, a light that shows the path I should take." And **Romans 15:4** reads: "Such things were written in the Scriptures [Bible] long ago to teach us. And the Scriptures give us hope and encouragement as we wait patiently for God's promises to be fulfilled."

Questions:

A. In the first verse, why is the Bible compared to a lamp and why does this matter?

A lamp is used a guide to keep your path safe and identify any potential dangers. It illuminates the dark places we travel.

B. How does the Bible show us the path we should take?

It makes clear what path is safe and wise to travel down. The light guides us in the dark.

C. How does the Bible give us "hope and encouragement" as we wait for God to fulfill His promises?

The hope and encouragement come to us as light in times of darkness, promises of God's protection, or assurance of God's presence during trials. He has always kept His promises. We can find rest in that truth.

2. In **Jeremiah 6:16** it reads: "Thus says the LORD: "Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls. But they said, 'We will not walk in it.'"

Questions:

A. How does this verse relate to the importance of the Bible being an historic document?

Others have walked with the Lord long before us and the Bible gives a historic account of them and the creation of Jesus. The Old Testament is preparing the way and predicting the coming of Jesus, the Messiah, and the New Testament is the account of Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection, which is the fulfillment of what is predicted in the Old Testament.

B. How is being on the path that God has for us bring "rest for our souls"?

We don't have to stress over decisions because He has prepared a path for us and has promised to show us the way- with Him in control we can trust and feel less pressure to make the "right choice".

C. While the statement "we will not walk in it" relates to many generations ago, how does it still apply to us today?

I think sometimes we can trick ourselves into believing we know better than the generations before us or even God's plans for our lives. We let our pride get in the way. It can be scary to trust when we realize we aren't ultimately in control of our lives.

3, In **Jeremiah 29:11** it reads: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Questions:

- A. In this verse, the Lord is speaking directly to you when HE says he has a plan for your life. Does this surprise you? Explain
- B. Are you struggling to know God's plan for your life? If yes, has today's lesson prepared you to find your purpose?

Example: Yes, I think a lot of my struggle comes from a desire to control my life.

For the remainder of today's meeting, prepare for next week's **INVITE** meeting by:

- 1. Asking a student to prepare a faith story (how Jesus has affected their life) for next week.
- 2. Asking a student to prepare to share the gospel and/or invitation next week.

Challenge: At the end of the meeting, gather in a circle and pray for each other.

Week 3: INVITE Week

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):

- Admit that you are a sinner. To "sin" means to make a bad choice out of selfish desires, and sin separates us from God because we are pursuing our own path aside from what God's perfect plan for us.
- Believe in Jesus and put your trust in Him. Christ's death on a cross was an act of selfless love. He took on the whole sins of humanity, making it possible for all people to be reunited with God.
- Confess Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. This means acknowledging that you want Him in your life. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." This means that we cannot be saved by being "good enough", but only through accepting Jesus as our Savior.

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. But, your Word 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, helping 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:
 - 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: Invite two friends to your youth group or church this week.

WEEK 4: CONNECT Week

This is the last week of the EPIC Cycle and we have been talking about how the Bible teaches us about God and helps us to know God's plan for our lives. This week, we will talk about how the Bible helps us to know that Jesus is the savior of mankind.

1. In **2 Samuel 7:12-13** of the Old Testament, we read a prophesy about Jesus. In this passage, God is talking to King David who lived approximately 1,000 years before Jesus: "When your days are fulfilled and you lie down [in death] with your fathers (ancestors), I will raise up your descendant after you, who shall be born to you, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³He [is the one who] shall build a house for My Name *and* My Presence, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever", which is then shown to be fulfilled in **Matthew 1:1** of the New Testament that lists the family members of Jesus: "This is the family history of Jesus the Messiah. He came from the family of David, who was from the family of Abraham."

Questions:

A. What is a prophecy and why is this one about Jesus important?

A prophecy is a prediction of something to come; This prophecy tells of the birth of Jesus and that he will be a descendant of David. The prophecy was written a 1,000 years before Jesus was born and was fulfilled.

B. Why does the Bible record God telling David about a descendent (family member) who will be called Jesus the Messiah?

In the old days, the Jews kept records of their descendants, especially those of King David. These records were to help establish lineage and give them proof of the Messiah (Savior). This was God's way of showing His people and all believers that they can trust His word.

C. Since the Bible is a historic record of God's promises to His people, how do these verses affect you?

It is proof to us that Jesus is the Savior that God promised to Abraham and King David. The records of lineage were eventually destroyed with the Jewish Temple, which makes the Bible the most reliable record of those who came before Jesus and it establishes him as a descendant of Abraham and David- the promised Messiah.

2. In Philippians 2: 6-7, the New Testament describes Jesus in the following way: "He was like God in every way, but he did not think that his being equal with God was something to use for his own benefit. Instead, he gave up everything, even his place with God. He accepted the role of a servant, appearing in human form."

Questions:

A. What is the significance of Jesus giving up his place with God to become human?

Jesus knows what it is like to be human and to suffer; he has compassion for and understands us. This makes him the perfect mediator between us and God.

B. Why is it important for us to understand that Jesus is equal to God?

Because it establishes his right to die in our place, serve as our Savior, and bring creation into perfect alignment in end times.

C. Why did Jesus come down from heaven to walk among us as a human?

Jesus was the "second Adam"- the perfect human who knew no sin (he was human but also God). As a perfect human, he was qualified and able to die on the cross to pay the penalty of our sin.

3. Please spend the rest of the meeting talking about why church is important for the growth of our faith (it is a place where we learn about God from the Bible), and how to get connected to a local church, if you are not already.

Challenge: Invite your friends to your youth group and/or church this week.