

## EPIC Cycle 8 Leaders' Guide: Symbols in the Old Testament of the Bible

### 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

The Bible is the inspired word of God, and it is how He reveals himself to us. There are two sections. The first section is the Old Testament, which predicts the Savior, and the second is New Testament, which reveals the Savior. Both sections congruently point to God's plan to redeem His people through Jesus Christ, the Savior. In this cycle, we will talk about several symbols in the Old Testament and how they apply to us today.

\*Student leaders, please see the Leaders' Guide for answers to the questions for each week.

**Memory Verse:** In Him [Jesus] we have redemption [that is, our deliverance and salvation] through His blood, [which paid the penalty for our sin and resulted in] the forgiveness *and* complete pardon of our sin, in accordance with the riches of His grace." **Ephesians 1:7**

### WEEK 1: EQUIP Week

In the Old Testament of the Bible, we read about Noah's Ark and the Ark of the Covenant. In this week's lesson, we will talk about what these represent and what they mean to us today.

1. In the Old Testament, we read about God instructing Noah to build an ark before the coming floods that would wipe out all living things on the earth. Among other things, the ark symbolizes God's promises and protection. Note: You can read about God's instructions about building the ark in **Genesis 6:17-22**.

In **Genesis 6:8** we read: "Then the Lord said to Noah, "Come into the ark, you with all your household, for you [alone] I have seen as righteous (doing what is right) before Me in this generation" and in **Genesis 7:16** we read: "Those which entered, male and female of all flesh (creatures), entered as God had commanded Noah; and the Lord closed *the door* behind him."

**Questions:**

- A. Why did God choose to save Noah and his family from the coming flood and why does this matter? Noah believed in God and followed His commands.
- B. Why is it important that the Lord "closed the door behind" them? God closed to protect them from the coming judgement of the floods. Consider a door being locked from the inside rather than being locked [or sealed] on the outside by God. They are safe and enclosed by the Father.
- C. How do these verses impact you as a believer (hint: think of protection and salvation)?

2. In the Old Testament and before Jesus died on the cross, believers did not have the Holy Spirit residing in them. In **Exodus 25:8** we read about God instructing His people "to Have the people of Israel build me a holy sanctuary so I can live among them" and **Exodus 40:34** reads: "Then the cloud covered the Meeting Tent and the Glory of the Lord filled the Holy Tent" (the tent is the sanctuary).

**Questions:**

- A. Why was the sanctuary called "holy" and why is this significant to us? It was holy because of God's presence. Wherever God [or the Holy Spirit] resides is Holy. If you are a believer in Jesus then the Holy Spirit "resides" in you, which makes you holy before God.
- B. Why did they need for God to "live among them" and how does He do this now? Because God desired to fellowship with His creation, as He still does today. God sent his son, Jesus, as a human to show us how to love and follow God. Now, the Holy Spirit lives in believers to help guide, teach, admonish, and keep us connected to God.

3. The Ark of the Covenant was located in the holy sanctuary/Meeting Tent and it contained the 10 Commandments, also known as God's law. In **Romans 3:20** and **Deuteronomy 30:16** we read about why God gave us His law: "Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin" "And I command you today: Love God, your God. Walk in his ways. Keep his commandments, regulations, and rules so that you will live, really live, live exuberantly, blessed by God, your God, in the land you are about to enter and possess".

**Questions:**

- A. What are the reasons God gave us "His law"? To help us know that we are sinners and fall short of God's holiness. It is in essence, a moral compass.
- B. Why do we no longer need the Meeting Tent or Ark of the Covenant? When Jesus died for our sins, we were given direct access to God, making it possible to speak to Him anytime and anywhere.
- C. How has this week's lesson better Equipped you to trust God?

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

## **WEEK 2: PREPARE Week**

Last week, we talked about Noah's Ark and the Ark of the Covenant. This week we will talk about the symbolism of the sacrificial system that is found in the Old Testament of the Bible. Please take your time as you read and discuss these questions, as this may be a new concept for many of you.

1. From the Old Testament, **Leviticus 17:11** reads: "This is because the life of the body is in the blood. I have told you that you must pour the blood on the altar to purify yourselves. It is the blood that makes a person pure." And from the New Testament, **Hebrews 9:22** reads: "In fact under the Law almost everything is cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness [neither release from sin and its guilt, nor cancellation of the merited punishment]."

In the Old Testament, God required that people sacrifice an animal as payment for their sins. The blood of the animal was poured onto the altar to God as a symbol of repentance. This sacrificial system was a substitute for what Jesus would do. In the New Testament, Jesus pays the penalty of OUR sin by dying for us. Then, His blood was sprinkled on God's altar in heaven- not as a symbol but as an actual payment for sin.

### **Questions:**

A. From the verse in Hebrews, how does blood cleanse sin and why is the shedding of blood necessary for forgiveness? Because God is Holy, our sin separates us from Him, we must be purified and made Holy to be in His presence. Blood represents life and the cost of sin is death. The blood of the animal was a substitute for what we owe God because of our sin and the sacrifice was a symbol of repentance- recognizing the devastating effects of sins and wanting forgiveness from God.

B. How was the sacrificial system a symbol of why Jesus had to die on the cross? When Jesus died on the cross, he took on the sin of all people and died in that sin. He was the living sacrifice [payment] for our sin, which is why his blood was sprinkled on the altar in heaven. It was the ultimate payment for all who believe in Jesus, and we know that God accepted the payment because Jesus rose again 3 days later in victory over death [he did not come back in a mortal body that would die in a grave. His resurrected body was an eternal one that is now in heaven with God.

2. And **Ephesians 1:7** reads: "In Him [Jesus] we have redemption [that is, our deliverance and salvation] through His blood, [which paid the penalty for our sin and resulted in] the forgiveness *and* complete pardon of our sin, in accordance with the riches of His grace."

### **Questions:**

A. What is redemption and what is Jesus saving us from? Redemption means the deliverance from the payment owed for the price of sinning against God, which all people do. Jesus saves believers from eternal separation from God and the punishment that comes with that.

B. Why must we be "pardoned" from our sin? The Bible describes our sin against God in legal terms- when we sin against God, we are condemned to eternity a part from Him. But, through Jesus' death, we are pardoned from this eternal death sentence.

C. How does this week's lesson PREPARE you to share the Gospel message during next week's meeting?

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: Invite at least two friends to next week's meeting.**

### **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: Pray for those who may a decision to follow Jesus today.**

**WEEK 4: CONNECT Week**

For the last few weeks, we have talked about symbolism in the Bible including Noah's ark, the Ark of the Covenant, and the sacrificial system. This week, we will talk about Jesus- the sacrificial Lamb of God.

In **Exodus 12:3,7,12, 13**, which is found in the Old Testament of the Bible, we read about the meaning of Passover: "Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household. Then they

are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs... "For I will pass through the land of Egypt tonight and kill all the oldest sons and firstborn male animals in all the land of Egypt, and execute judgment upon all the gods of Egypt—for I am Jehovah. <sup>13</sup>The blood you have placed on the doorposts will be proof that you obey me, and when I see the blood I will pass over you and I will not destroy your firstborn children when I smite the land of Egypt." And **1 Corinthians 5:7b** reads: "For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed."

**Questions:**

A. How did God instruct the Israelites to protect themselves from death in the Exodus passages? They were instructed to sacrifice a lamb and then put the lamb's blood on the top and sides of the door of their house. The lamb represented the predicted sacrifice of Jesus on the cross; and the front door represented protection, and passage from this life to eternal life.

B. What is Jesus called in the second verse and is this related to his death? The Passover lamb. His precious blood was poured out for us when He died on the cross to cover our sins. We are saved by His blood.

**2. 1 Peter 1:18-19**, which is found in the New Testament of the Bible, we read: "You know that in the past the way you were living was useless. It was a way of life you learned from those who lived before you. But you were saved from that way of living. You were bought, but not with things that ruin like gold or silver.<sup>19</sup> You were bought with the precious blood of Christ's death. He was a pure and perfect sacrificial Lamb."

**Questions:**

A. What is Jesus referred to in these verses and why does this matter? A pure and perfect sacrificial lamb because Jesus was perfect and his death on the cross was accepted by God- once and for all.

B. How do the verses in the Old Testament about a sacrificial lamb CONNECT to the verses about Jesus in the New Testament? The Old Testament is a book about the coming Messiah who would save God's people from eternal separation from God. The sacrificial lamb is a symbol of Jesus, and the sacrifice he would make on behalf of those who believed in as the Messiah.

C. What have you learned in this Epic Cycle that has helped you to trust God more?

**Challenge: Over the next week, commit to reading Hebrews in the New Testament of the Bible.**