

EPIC Cycle 2: Leader's Guide

Beginning of Meeting:

For your first meeting, please follow this as a guide:

- Welcome everyone and open in prayer
- Explain what First Priority is (a Christian group, but you do not have to be a Christian to attend)
- Start with a quick icebreaker (idea: ask everyone to say their favorite movie as a child)
- Ask everyone to download the First Priority of Tampa Bay phone app
- Assign someone to report weekly attendance on the First Priority of Tampa Bay phone app
- Assign someone to send meeting reminders to the group (REMIND or GROUPME)
- Start this week's lesson
- Close the meeting in prayer

Topic:

In the Old Testament of the Bible, we read about several covenants, each with its unique purpose. A covenant is defined as a promise, agreement, or contract. In this cycle, we will talk about God's covenants with Noah, Abraham, Moses, and the new covenant of Jesus.

Memory Verse: "Happy are those who follow [God's] commands, who obey him with all their heart."
Psalm 119:2

Week 1: EQUIP

In this week's lesson, we will discuss God's covenant with Noah and Abraham, and how they impact us today.

1. In **Genesis 6:5-6,8,9b**, we read about the wickedness of humans and the faithfulness of Noah: "The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled. But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD...Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God."

Questions:

- A. According to these verses, what were people like in these times? They did very bad things and all their thoughts were focused on evil.
- B. How did they cause God to feel and why is this important? God's heart was "deeply troubled"; these verses show that God is paying attention to us and is deeply hurt when we turn from Him and/or act in evil ways.
- C. What is unique about Noah? Noah was righteous and walked faithfully with God.

2. In **Genesis 6:17b,18-19,22**, God instructs Noah to build an ark (boat) for his family and two of every animal: "I will bring a great flood of water on the earth. I will destroy all living things that live under heaven. Everything on the earth will die. I will make a special agreement with you [covenant]. You, your wife, your sons, and their wives will all go into the boat. Also, you will take two of every living thing on the earth with you into the boat. Take a male and female of every kind of animal so that they might survive with you. Noah did everything God commanded him."

Questions:

- A. What does God instruct Noah to do and why? God instructs Noah to build a huge boat and to bring two of every kind of animal on board; the ark protected Noah and his family, and the animals on board when the floods came.
- B. How did Noah respond and why is this important? Noah did everything that God commanded, and it shows Noah's obedience and faithfulness to God.

3. In **Genesis 7: 17a,23, and 9:11,13** we read: "Water flooded the earth for 40 days. In this way God wiped the earth clean—he destroyed every living thing on the earth—every human, every animal, everything that crawls, and every bird. All that was left was Noah and his family and the animals that were with him in the boat. This is my promise to you: All life on the earth was destroyed by the flood. But that will never happen again. A flood will never again destroy all life on the earth. I am putting a rainbow in the clouds as proof of the agreement between me and the earth. "

Questions:

- A. Why did God send the flood to kill all living things? God is holy and perfect, and mankind had become completely corrupt; through Noah and his family, he was giving mankind a second chance.
- B. What does God promise and what is the symbol as proof? God promises to never send a flood that will kill all life on the earth and a rainbow is given as reminder and proof of his promise.

4. In **Genesis 12:1**, we read about Abram (who was later called Abraham by God): "The LORD said to Abram, "Leave your country, your relatives, and your father's home, and go to a land that I am going to show you. This is the first account in the Bible of God's interaction with Abraham."

Questions:

- A. Why is God asking Abraham to leave everything that is familiar to him? This is a journey of faith and God is asking Abraham to trust Him.
- B. What is the first promise that God makes to Abraham (hint: it's the last part of the verse above)? God is taking Abraham to a new land.
- C. Have you ever had to leave your home or relatives unexpectedly? If yes, please provide details.

5. In **Genesis 12:2-3**, we read more of God's promises to Abraham: "I will give you many descendants, and they will become a great nation. I will bless you and make your name famous, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, But I will curse those who curse you. And through you I will bless all the nations."

Questions:

- A. What is the God promising Abraham in the beginning of the verse? To give him many descendants (children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, etc.).
- B. What is God promising to do through Abraham? Bless all the nations of the world.

Week 2: PREPARE

Please follow these steps for the meeting:

- Welcome everyone and open in prayer
- Explain what First Priority is (a Christian group, but you do not have to be a Christian to attend)
- Start with a quick icebreaker
- Start this week's lesson
- Close the meeting in prayer
- Report attendance on the First Priority of Tampa Bay phone app

Last week, we discussed God's covenant with Noah and Abraham. This week, we will continue talking about Abraham and then Moses, and we will close out the meeting by PREPARING for next week's CONNECT meeting.

1. In **James 2:23**, we read: "And the scripture came true that said, "Abraham believed God, and because of his faith God accepted him as righteous." And so Abraham was called God's friend. And **Genesis 22:8** reads: "And in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice."

Questions:

- A. Why did God accept Abraham as righteous and call him friend? Because Abraham believed in a trusted God's promises, guidance, and love.
- B. Why is significant about Abraham being God's friend? It shows us God's desire to be close to his children.
- C. Do you trust God's voice like Abraham? Why or why not?

2. In **Exodus 24:12**, we read about God's promises made to the Israelites through Moses: "The LORD said to Moses, "Come up the mountain to me, and while you are here, I will give you two stone tablets which contain all the laws that I have written for the instruction of the people." If the Israelites followed these laws and instructions, God promised to bless His people. This is the Mosaic Covenant."

Questions:

- A. Does anyone know what the two stone tablets contained and were called? The Ten Commandments, which can be found in Exodus 20.
- B. Why would God give the Israelites these laws? The rules helped the Israelites to know how to lives that were pleasing and acceptable to God.

3. In **Psalms 119:2** reads: "Happy are those who follow his commands, who obey him with all their heart."

Question:

- A. How does this verse encourage and PREPARE you to share God's love with others?

4. PREPARE for next week's meeting by following this checklist:

- Ask a student leader to share his/her testimony next week
- Ask a student leader to read the invitation next week

- Ask two students to print and bring the response cards and pens for next week
- Invite your friends to attend the meeting next week
- **Action:** Take time this week to read the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20).

Week 3: INVITE

This week, a student will share a faith story and another will share the invitation. Please follow these steps at the beginning of the meeting:

- Welcome everyone and open in prayer
- Explain what First Priority is (a Christian group, but you do not have to be a Christian to attend)
- The student shares their faith story
- The student reads the invitation
- Hand out the Student Response Cards (found on the FP website)
- Close meeting in prayer
- Report attendance & decisions on First Priority of Tampa Bay phone app

Invitation/Prayer (*read out loud*):

And now we will pray. This is not a magical prayer. It is simply an opportunity to respond to the gospel message which is this: Jesus is God's son and he died on the cross as payment for our sins. He then rose from the dead three days later, proving that God accepted Jesus' death as payment.

(Please ask students to bow their heads and close their eyes)

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 am sorry for the ways that I have sinned against you. I pray that you will come into my life and help me to trust in you. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Follow-up Plan: Once you have shared the gospel and invitation, collect the Student Response Cards (can be downloaded from the First Priority website) and then follow these steps:

Student leaders commit to praying for and contacting any student who has decided to follow Christ and/or has questions.

1. When contacting these students, student leaders will want to:
 - Answer any questions
 - Offer to pray for them
 - Invite them to the next week's CONNECT Week meeting
 - Invite them to your church
2. Return all Student Response cards to a student leader or teacher sponsor (Response cards or information on the cards must never be given to an outside adult or organization/ church)

Action: Invite 2 friends to church or youth group this week.

Week 4: CONNECT

Please follow these steps at the beginning of the meeting:

- Welcome everyone and open in prayer
- Explain what First Priority is (a Christian group, but you do not have to be a Christian to attend)
- Start this week's lesson
- Close meeting in prayer
- Report attendance & decisions on First Priority of Tampa Bay phone app

In this cycle, we have been talking about God's covenants- His promises. In this last week of the EPIC cycle, we will talk about the New Covenant. In the New Testament of the Bible, God provides a new covenant that emphasis grace, forgiveness, salvation, and a personal connection with God through faith in Jesus.

1. In **Jeremiah 31:33**, we read God's plan for a new covenant: "In the future I will make this agreement with the people of Israel." This message is from the LORD. "I will put my teachings in their minds, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people." And in **Proverbs 1:23b**: "Behold, I will pour out my spirit to you; I will make my words known to you."

Questions:

- A. What does God promise in the new covenant? God promises to put His teachings in their minds and write them on their hearts.
- B. How does God intend to do this? Through the Holy Spirit, which is given to all who place their faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

2. In **Hebrews 7: 18, -20a, 22** we read how Jesus is the foundation of the new covenant: "The old rule is now ended because it was weak and worthless. The Law of Moses could not make anything perfect. But now a better hope has been given to us. And with that hope we can come near to God. Also, it is important that God made a promise with an oath when he made Jesus high priest. So this means that Jesus is the guarantee of a better agreement from God to his people."

Questions:

- A. How is the Law of Moses described (hint: read the first sentence again)? It has ended because it could not save people from their sin.
- B. What did the law fail to do and why is this important? The law could not restore people to God- it only served to point out their sin.

3. In **Hebrews 9:15**, we read that this covenant completes all that God promised: "So Christ brings a new agreement from God to his people. He brings this agreement so that those who are chosen by God can have the blessings God promised, blessings that last forever. This can happen only because Christ died to free people from sins committed against the commands of the first agreement."

Questions:

- A. Who brings the new promise and what are the blessings he brings? Jesus Christ brings the blessing of peace and restoration between believers and God; they are restored to and can never be separated from God.
- B. How does this week's lesson help you to CONNECT with God through Jesus?

4. Spend the remainder of the meeting talking about what you have learned in this cycle and how the holy spirit has helped you.

Action: Invite 3 new friends to next week's First Priority meeting.

Additional Resource:

Bible Project video on covenants: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/covenants/>

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