

EPIC Cycle 3 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: The first Bible stories were originally shared with others through the spoken word and then eventually written down and the writings were then compiled into what we now call the Bible- also referred to as the scriptures, God's word, statutes, and precepts. In this cycle, we will discuss the purposes of the Bible.

Memory Verse: "The LORD guides us in the way we should go and protects those who please him. If they fall, they will not stay down, because the LORD will help them up." **Psalm 37:23-24**

Week 1: EQUIP

1. In **2 Timothy 3:26** we read: "All Scripture is given by God. And all Scripture is useful for teaching and for showing people what is wrong in their lives. It is useful for correcting faults and teaching the right way to live."

Questions:

- A. According to this verse, what is given to us by God? ALL scripture/the Bible
- B. In this verse, what are the purposes of scripture? To teach us, show us what is wrong in our lives, correct our mistakes, and teach us the right way to live
- C. Why do you think people don't read or follow the Bible today?

2. In **Romans 15:4** we read: "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.." And **Psalm 119:11** reads: "I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you."

Questions:

- A. How else do the scriptures help us? Gives us hope, patience, and encouragement
- B. How does storing up God's word in our heart help us? It helps us not sin against God
- C. How do we store it in our hearts? When we read, meditate, and memorize the words of the Bible, we can recall it when we are struggling, doubting, or want to be thankful

3. In **Jeremiah 15:16** we read: "You spoke to me, and I listened to every word. I belong to you, LORD God Almighty, and so your words filled my heart with joy and happiness." And **Hebrews 4:12** reads: "God's word is alive and working. It is sharper than the sharpest sword and cuts all the way into us. It cuts deep to the place where the soul and the spirit are joined. And it judges the thoughts and feelings in our heart. "

Questions:

- A. What is one take away from reading these two verses together? God's word is always moving, working, and speaking to those who are willing to listen
- B. Have you heard this before? If no, how does this make you feel?

4. In **Isaiah 40:8**, we read: "Grass dies and flowers fall, but the word of our God lasts forever."

Questions:

- A. What are the implications of this verse? The Bible is eternal, and we can trust that God has written it and speaks to us through it
- B. How does this week's lesson EQUIP you to trust God's word?

Action: Read, meditate on, and memorize two Bible verses this week; ask a friend or family member about their favorite Bible verse.

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 talked about how the Bible helps us to know and trust God. This week, we will talk about how the Bible is like a plumb line in our lives (a plumb line is a measuring tool used for determining an exact vertical line).

1. **Amos 7:8a** reads: "Then the Lord said, "I'm going to hold a plumb line in the middle of my people Israel. I will no longer overlook what they have done." And **Isaiah 28:17** reads: "I will make justice a measuring line and righteousness a plumb line. Hail will sweep away your refuge of lies, and floodwaters will wash away your hiding place."

Questions:

- A. In the first verse, what does God promise to do? To hold a plumb line in the middle of his people
- B. According to the second verse, what was he "sweeping away"? Their lies
- C. Based on what you know about God, why was he threatening this? God is holy, just, and blameless, which means he cannot tolerate sin

2. In **Zechariah 4:10** reads: "People will not be ashamed of the small beginnings, and they will be very happy when they see Zerubbabel with the plumb line, measuring and checking the finished building. Now the seven sides of the stone you saw represent the eyes of the LORD looking in every direction. They see everything on earth."

Note: Zerubbabel was a Jewish leader who was best known for leading the rebuilding of God's Temple in Jerusalem, which is why he would have used a plumb line.

Questions:

- A. Why would he have used a plumb line to measure and check the finished building? It was important to confirm that the building was on a firm foundation and securely built so it would last
- B. What are the implications of this verse on our lives? The Bible helps us to check ourselves so we can live a life that is honoring and in-line with God's word

3. In **Isaiah 34:11a**, we read: "For God will measure that land carefully; he will measure it for chaos and destruction. And **Isaiah 5:20** reads: Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!"

Questions:

- A. In the first verse, what is God measuring in the world? The chaos and destruction
- B. Who is the warning for in the second verse? For those who think that evil is good and good is evil
- C. How does the Bible help us to know the difference between good and evil? The Bible provides clear differences between what God considers holy and unholy; there are also examples given in the Old and New Testaments.

4. Use the remainder of today's meeting to PREPARE for next week's INVITE meeting by using 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: Invite two friends to next week's INVITE meeting.

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)

Week 4: CONNECT

In this cycle, we have talked about the purpose of the Bible and how it provides a vertical line to God (a plumb line). This week, we will talk about how the Bible is a compass for those who put their faith in trust in Jesus.

Note: When reading scripture, keep in mind that the *Word* may refer to what God has said, and/or to Jesus Christ, the son of God.

1. A compass is a navigational tool that is used to determine direction. In **John 14:6**, we read: "Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Questions:

- A. In what direction is Jesus pointing us (as a directional compass)? Towards God
- B. Does this verse clearly point in one direction and why does this matter? Yes, faith in Jesus is the only way for us to be reconnected to God and this is clearly stated (and unambiguous)
- C. Have you heard this before? If no, then how does this verse make you feel?

2. In **Psalm 119:105**, we read: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." And In **Psalm 32:8**, we read: "The LORD says, "I will teach you the way you should go; I will instruct you and advise you."

Questions:

- A. How does the Bible provide a lighted path towards God? The Bible instructs, guides, and encourages us follow God
- B. Who is responsible for showing us the right/best path? It is God's responsibility; it is our responsibility to follow His path

3. In **Psalm 37:23-24**, we read: "The LORD guides us in the way we should go and protects those who please him. If they fall, they will not stay down, because the LORD will help them up." And in **Isaiah 30:21**, we read: "If you wander off the road to the right or the left, you will hear his voice behind you saying, "Here is the road. Follow it."

Questions:

- A. In the first verse, what does God promise to those who follow Him? He will guide and protect them; and help them when they fall (make mistakes)
- B. What happens if we wonder off the God's path and how will we hear his voice? The Holy Spirit gently guides us in the direction that we are to go
- C. Have you wondered off the road towards God? If yes, how can we pray for you today?

4. For the remainder of today's meeting, talk about how this week's lesson can help you to CONNECT with God in a new way.

Action: Invite a friend to your church or youth group who is not currently going to a church.

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