

BUILDING THE TABERNACLE

EXODUS 35-40



KEY PASSAGE: 1 Samuel 2:2

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why do we need to be saved? People are sinful and cannot save themselves.

CHRIST CONNECTION: God told Moses and the people to build the tabernacle so that He could dwell among them. We no longer need a tabernacle because those who trust in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection have been given the Holy Spirit so that God lives in us, not merely near us.

STORY POINT: The tabernacle was built for God to dwell with His people.



PREPARE

PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

LEADER Bible Study

Today's passage highlights the wonder that a holy God would desire to dwell among His people. In the previous chapter, God instructed the Israelites to obediently abide within His covenantal love. Now, it was time to build the place where God would dwell with His people as they journeyed toward the Promised Land.

What was the significance of the people's tabernacle offerings? Why don't Christians meet with the Lord in a tabernacle today?

God's instructions were for each of the tabernacle's components to be freely given by all who were willing. He called for artisans to use their skills to construct, create, and design the tabernacle and all its furnishings. Scripture details that everyone whose heart was moved and whose spirit was prompted brought an offering to the Lord for the tent of meeting and its services, as well as for the priest's holy garments. The people offered up their finest jewelry, textiles, spices, and oils—all of which were initially provided by God Himself when the people fled Egypt. Skilled designers were even gifted the ability to teach others their craft. Together, these craftsmen lent their time and skills to the work of the tabernacle. Eventually, people brought much more than was needed, so Moses ordered them to stop! They had more than enough materials to construct a tent according to God's commands and worthy of His presence.

Today, though we gather at local churches to worship God and commune with fellow believers, it is not in physical structures where God dwells among His people. Instead, those who are in Christ receive the gift of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us. Jesus tells us in John 16:7 that the gift of the Holy Spirit is greater than His physical presence was as He walked among His disciples! Pray for the Lord to prompt your kids to heed His call of salvation, that He would dwell within them as their Lord. May we read of the tabernacle's splendor and respond, not out of obligation, but in awe of the closeness and kindness of our Lord.



PREPARE

THE WEEK PRIOR

Prepare your heart to teach; plan the session



WELCOME

10-15 MINUTES

Greet kids and open the session



LEARN

25-30 MINUTES

Teach kids the story of the gospel



LOVE

15-20 MINUTES

Lead kids to love the God of the gospel



LIVE

15-20 MINUTES

Lead kids to live out the mission of the gospel



PREPARE

PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

GATHER Supplies

Keep a regular supply of the following items available at all times: Bibles, pens or pencils, markers, crayons, colored pencils, scissors, glue or tape, paper.



WELCOME

Activity Page

- "Connect It" activity page

Session Starter (Option 1)

- bedsheets, 1 per group

Session Starter (Option 1)

- various materials such as gold and silver costume jewelry; purple, scarlet, and blue yarn; linen cloth; leather; wood; oil; spices; and costume gemstones



LOVE

Review & Bible Skills

- Small Group Timeline and Map Set (optional)



LIVE

Activity Choice (Option 1)

- brown craft paper or poster paper sheets, 1 per kid

Activity Choice (Option 2)

- "Books of the Bible Puzzle" printable, 1 per kid

Reflection and Prayer

- Bible Story Coloring Page (optional)



LEARN

Introduce the Session

- countdown video
- Story Point Poster

Big Picture Question

- Big Picture Question Poster

Review the Timeline

- Giant Timeline

Tell the Bible Story

- "Building the Tabernacle" video
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- bedsheets or tablecloths (optional)

Questions from Kids

- "Unit 5, Session 3" Questions from Kids video

Key Passage Activity

- Key Passage Poster
- "No One Like the Lord (1 Samuel 2:2)" song
- worship song of your choice (optional)



WELCOME Kids

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, build relationships, and help new kids connect to your group.

SAY “Have you ever built something? What did you build? How did you get the materials to build it?”

1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete “Connect It” activity page.

SAY “Today, we will learn how God commanded His people to build a tabernacle or a special tent. We’ll see that **THE TABERNACLE WAS BUILT FOR GOD TO DWELL WITH HIS PEOPLE.**”

2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: BUILD A TENT



Form kids into groups of three or four and provide each group with a bedsheet. Challenge groups to use their bedsheet to build a tent. Tell kids they can use chairs, tables, or other classroom items to help create their tent. Once each group has made their tent, invite groups to walk around and observe how everyone’s tent was built.

SAY “Today, we will learn how God commanded His people to build the tabernacle. Like the tents you made, the tabernacle was also a tent, but it was much bigger. The tabernacle was made to be packed up and carried from place to place as God led His people. We’ll learn about many of the important pieces made to go inside the tabernacle. But most of all, we’ll see that **THE TABERNACLE WAS BUILT FOR GOD TO DWELL WITH HIS PEOPLE.**”

OPTION 2: TABERNACLE TREASURES

Before the session, gather various materials to represent the offerings used for the tabernacle such as gold and silver costume jewelry; purple, scarlet, and blue yarn; linen cloth; leather; wood; oil; spices; and costume gemstones. Display the items on a table.

Pass each item, one at a time, around to the kids. Ask kids what they think about the items and if they would consider these items treasures. Then ask kids if they think these items could be used to make anything.

SAY “Today, we’ll learn how God’s people gave materials to build a special tent called the tabernacle. They gave gold, silver, yarn, wood, spices, animal skins, and more. In fact, we’ll see that God’s people gave more than what was needed. The people gave their treasures to God because He is worthy of it all.”

Transition from **WELCOME** to **LEARN**





INTRODUCE the Bible Story

1 INTRODUCE THE SESSION (3 minutes)



Show the countdown video as you transition to introduce the Bible story. Set it to end as the session begins.

SAY “Hi, kids! My name is [your name], and I am so glad you are here to learn from God’s Word. God’s Word teaches us about God and how He loves the people He made. Even though we sin, God still loves us. In our story today, we will see that God loved His people so much that He wanted to be with them. God commanded His people to build a special tent called the tabernacle. **THE TABERNACLE WAS BUILT FOR GOD TO DWELL WITH HIS PEOPLE.** [Display the Story Point Poster.]”



If you have a Bible with you, will you take it out? [Distribute Bibles to kids who need one.] Today, we will be reading from the book of Exodus. Let’s pray for God to help us remember His love for us: ‘Dear God, please help us see how much You love Your people and how You want to be with us. Please give us hearts to believe Your Word. Amen.’”

worship

2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

Display the Big Picture Question Poster.

* Firm Foundation
* King of Kings
* offering



SAY “Let’s review our big picture question. Do you remember it? [Allow responses.] **Why do we need to be saved?** What is the answer? [Allow responses.] **People are sinful and cannot save themselves.** Let’s repeat the answer: **People are sinful and cannot save themselves.**”



In our story, we will see how the Israelites built the tabernacle as a place where God would dwell with them. The word dwell simply means God wanted to be with His people. God’s presence among His people showed them that He loved them, and it reminded them that God’s presence required them to be holy. In fact, God loves people so much that He made the way to be saved from their sin. People cannot save themselves; they need a Savior. Jesus is the Savior of the world who gave His life so we can live with God forever.”

3 REVIEW THE TIMELINE (1 minute)

Show the Giant Timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

SAY “God has always wanted to be with people. God made Adam and Eve and met with them in the garden of Eden. Even after people sinned, God showed that He loved people and was making a way to be with them forever. Last week, we saw how the Israelites sinned by making and worshiping a golden calf instead of worshiping the one true God. But God did not destroy His people and remembered His promise to bless the world through Abraham’s family. Today, we will learn that God commanded His people to build a tabernacle where God could dwell or be with His people.”



LEARN the Bible Story



1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY: VIDEO OR STORYTELLER (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Exodus 35:4–40:38. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Building the Tabernacle.” Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

BUILDING THE TABERNACLE

“While the Israelites were still at Mount Sinai, **God commanded Moses to build a tabernacle. It would be a place for God to dwell among His people.** God told Moses to invite all the Israelites to be a part of this building project.

First, Moses invited the Israelites to give their money and their possessions so that the tabernacle could be built. The people gave gold, silver, and bronze. They gave blue, purple, and scarlet yarn. They gave goat and ram skins and fine leather. They gave precious, beautiful gemstones. **The people were so generous that Moses had to tell them to stop giving because they had far more than they needed!**

Next, Moses requested for people with the special skills of building, sculpting, weaving, designing, and decorating to come and help with the tabernacle and all its special furnishings. Many artists came to give their time and their talents, and **God’s Spirit filled a man named Bezalel to lead the construction and design of the tabernacle. God also gave a man named Oholiab the ability to teach others how to design, weave, cut gems, and more.**

Bezalel, Oholiab, and many other artists worked hard on the tabernacle. They made huge curtains to be the walls of the tabernacle. **They made a special box, called the ark, and overlaid it with gold. The ark had a special seat called the mercy seat with two cherubim at each end. The mercy seat was where the high priest would sprinkle the blood of a sacrificial animal to ask God for forgiveness of sins.** They made a gold table, a gold lampstand, two altars, and a bronze basin, or bowl. These items would be used in the worship of God.

They also made special clothes for Aaron and the other priests to wear. Aaron’s garments included a special breastpiece that had twelve different gemstones on it—one for each of the twelve sons of Jacob. **These clothes could only be worn in the tabernacle and would show that Aaron and the priests were set apart for a special work of God.**

Moses inspected all the work that had been done. He saw that everything had been done just as the Lord had commanded. Moses blessed the people and then set up the tabernacle. Once it was completed, **the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Wherever the people traveled, the cloud of the Lord stayed with the tabernacle during the day, and there was fire inside the cloud at night.**

STORYTELLING TIPS

Keep track: Invite kids to keep track of all the different furnishings made for the tabernacle such as the ark, mercy seat, lampstand, breastplate, bronze basin, etc.

Create a tent: Use bedsheets or tablecloths to create a “tabernacle” in your room. Invite kids to join you in the “tabernacle” as you tell the story.



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

Christ Connection: God told Moses and the people to build the tabernacle so that He could dwell among them. We no longer need a tabernacle, because those who trust in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection have been given the Holy Spirit so that God lives in us, not merely near us. 33

2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

SAY 16 God told Moses to build a place for Him to be with His people. He gave Moses instructions for building the tabernacle. He also told His people that the tabernacle should be a place of worship and a place to make sacrifices for the people's sins. Who did God invite to help build the tabernacle? [Allow responses.] God invited all the people to help build the tabernacle by giving their possessions, time, and talents. God wanted the people to give with a joyful heart. Did the people give to build the tabernacle? Yes, they even gave more than what was needed! God's people showed that God was worth giving their special treasure to. He is better than anything on this earth.

The skilled workers built the tabernacle and made all the special pieces to go inside the tabernacle. These pieces were going to be used to worship God. Even the priests had to wear special clothes when they went in the tabernacle. The people made everything as God commanded.

THE TABERNACLE WAS BUILT FOR GOD TO DWELL WITH HIS PEOPLE. Once the tabernacle was finished, how did God make His presence known? [Allow responses.] The Bible tells us that God's glory filled the temple. God showed His love for them by dwelling with them. God revealed that He wants to be with the people He made. Through faith in Jesus, we can live with God forever.

God told Moses and the people to build the tabernacle so that He could dwell among them. We no longer need a tabernacle because those who trust in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection have been given the Holy Spirit so that God lives in us, not merely near us. 33

3 GOSPEL DISCUSSION

SAY 16 Just as God wanted to be with His people, Israel, God wants to be with us! Those who place their faith in Jesus have their sin forgiven so they can have the Holy Spirit live inside them now and have the hope of eternal life with God forever. 33

(Tip: Use Scripture and the Gospel Plan Poster to explain how to become a Christian. Create an environment where kids are welcome to ask questions about what it means to follow Jesus.)

4 QUESTIONS FROM KIDS (3 minutes)

Show the "Unit 5, Session 3" Questions from Kids video. Prompt kids to discuss:

1. How can God be with everyone at the same time?
2. Does the Holy Spirit live in you? Why or why not?



5 MISSIONS MOMENT (3 minutes)

optional

Lead kids to sit in a circle. Play a game where the first kid names something that is red, the second kid names something white, and the third kid names something blue. When you reach the fourth kid, begin the cycle again. Explain that each kid has five seconds to name something. If he cannot think of something in the appropriate color, he is out of the game. Play until only one winner is left.

SAY 🗨️ Washington, DC, is America’s capital, and the colors red, white, and blue are the nation’s colors. While Washington, DC, is America’s capital, it is considered one of the most globally diverse cities in the world. People from all over the world move to DC to live, work, and study. Missionary church planters are sharing Jesus with the people in the Washington, DC, area but more churches are needed. We can pray that God would provide more people to start churches to reach the nations living in Washington, DC. 🗨️

6 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)



Show the Key Passage Poster. Lead kids in reading aloud 1 Samuel 2:2 together.

SAY 🗨️ God is holy and set apart from us, but through Jesus we can live with Him forever. Let’s practice our key passage and remember that trusting in Jesus makes us right with God. 🗨️

Direct kids to listen closely as you say the key passage aloud. As you say the key passage, replace one of the words with an incorrect word. Direct kids to shout out “gotcha” when they hear the incorrect word. Then challenge them to give the correct word. Repeat for as long as time allows, replacing a new word each time.



Lead kids to sing “No One Like the Lord (1 Samuel 2:2).” You may also choose to sing a worship song of your choice.

7 PRAY (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before transitioning to Love.

SAY 🗨️ Thank You, Lord, for Your mercy and grace. Thank You for sending Jesus so our sins can be forgiven and the Holy Spirit can live inside those who trust in You. In Jesus’ name, amen. 🗨️

Transition from **LEARN** to **LOVE**





THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

LOVE God by Applying the Story

1 REVIEW & BIBLE SKILLS (5 minutes)

Distribute Bibles and display the Old Testament Mediterranean Map. Guide kids to open their Bibles to Exodus 40. Tell kids that the Israelites spent about a year at Mount Sinai after they fled from Egypt. Explain that during this time God gave them His laws, commanded them to build the tabernacle, and then gave them instructions for how to worship at the tabernacle.

Consider pointing out Mount Sinai (I9) on the Old Testament Mediterranean Map. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Exodus 40:34 or ask the kids to follow along as you read the verse aloud.

SAY “ Before the tabernacle was built, God’s presence appeared in the form of a cloud on top of Mount Sinai. God was high on a mountain. After the tabernacle was built, He lived among them. God’s glory filled the tabernacle, and His presence was made known among the people.

Jesus came down from heaven and lived with sinful people. He died on the cross and rose again so that anyone who trusts in Him will be forgiven of sin. Through faith in Jesus, people can live with God forever. ”

2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

SAY “ God’s people used their skills to make the tabernacle. What skills has God given you? How can you use these skills to honor God? ”

Answers will vary. Discuss how God gives all people certain skills, talents, personalities, and passions that He can use for His glory. Encourage kids to remember that God deserves our worship, and by using our talents for Him, we can worship Him.

SAY “ The tabernacle was a tent that could be packed up and carried. Why was this important? ”

Remind kids that while Israel had been camped at Mount Sinai, God was leading them to the Promised Land. Explain that the tabernacle needed to be moved from location to location as God led them. Discuss how God’s presence guided them by cloud.

SAY “ An important piece in the tabernacle was called the ark or the ark of the covenant. What was inside the ark? Look at Exodus 40:20. ”

Help kids understand that the “testimony” was the two stone tablets that had the Ten Commandments God had written. Discuss how the ark also had a special piece on top called the mercy seat. Tell kids that this is where God would meet with the high priest to provide forgiveness of sins. Remind kids that sin is disobeying God and His commands.

Transition from **LOVE** to **LIVE**





THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LIVE the Mission

1 ACTIVITY CHOICE (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: GOD WITH US

Invite kids to spread out around the room. Provide each kid with brown craft paper or long sheets of poster paper. Form kids into pairs and distribute markers to each pair. Then challenge kids to trace their partner's body outline. Assist kids as needed. Invite kids to color their body outlines with their hair color, eye color, clothes, etc. Invite volunteers to share their drawings with the group.

SAY *“THE TABERNACLE WAS BUILT FOR GOD TO DWELL WITH HIS PEOPLE. But when Jesus came to dwell on earth, He made the way for people to have God’s presence live inside them. When we trust in Jesus, the Holy Spirit lives in us. A tabernacle is no longer needed because the Holy Spirit is with believers wherever they go. Christians have the hope of living with God forever.”*

OPTION 2: BIBLE BOOKS PUZZLES



Provide each kid with a of “Books of the Bible Puzzle” printable and scissors. Lead kids to cut out each shape. Once they have the shapes cut out, direct kids to mix up the puzzle pieces. Then lead kids to arrange the Bible books in the correct order by matching the shapes together like a puzzle piece. Invite kids to raise their hand once they are finished with their puzzle so you can check to see if they matched them correctly. Provide kids with a plastic baggie and lead them to place their puzzle pieces in the bag. Invite kids to take their puzzles home to practice learning the first 15 books of the Bible. You may also consider laminating the puzzle pieces for future use.

SAY *“The Bible is God’s Word to us. When we read our Bible and become more familiar with its stories, we learn more about God’s plan to save us from sin. Each book of the Bible is important to know because each one teaches us more about how the Bible points to God’s Son, Jesus, and how faith in Him provides the way to live with God forever.”*

2 REFLECTION AND PRAYER (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper and pencil to each kid. Ask kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Who can I tell about this story?

Be sure to send the sheets home with the kids along with the activity pages so parents can continue to discuss the Bible story with their kids. If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page. Pray for your group.