Unit 6 Session 2: The Tabernacle Was Built

Bible Passage: Exodus 35:4-40:38
Main Point: God told His people to build the tabernacle.
Unit 6 Key Passage: Leviticus 11:45
Big Picture Question: Who can keep God’s law? No one can keep God’s law except Jesus.

Leader DEVOTIONAL

Leaders: this is just for you! Read ahead of time to engage with the Bible story on an adult level and prepare your heart to teach on Sunday.

Thirteen of the last sixteen chapters of the Book of Exodus consist of instructions for building the tabernacle. The word tabernacle means “dwelling place.” The tabernacle was a portable tent where God met with His people. God had a great purpose for the tabernacle. (See Ex. 29:45-46.)

Moses had been on the mountain talking with God for 40 days. God wrote the Ten Commandments, the words of the covenant, on tablets. When Moses returned, he called all of the Israelite community together and gave them the instructions God had given him. (Ex. 24:3-4)

God’s directions for building the tabernacle were very detailed. God was not trying to burden the people; He was trying to show them His holiness and absolute authority. God appointed Bezalel and Oholiab to oversee the building of the tabernacle, giving them wisdom, understanding, and craftsmanship. Every skilled person “whose heart moved him” eagerly worked on the tabernacle of the Lord. (See Ex. 35:30-35; 36:1-6.)

God gave the Israelites the tabernacle as a visual picture of His dwelling with them. The tabernacle—and later the temple that replaced it—was a temporary place for God’s glory to dwell until the coming of Christ. (2 Cor. 4:6) Every part of the tabernacle was designed to illustrate God’s relationship with His people.

Christ is the New Testament fulfillment of the Old Testament tabernacle. John 1:14 says that “the Word became flesh and took up residence among us.” Jesus made His dwelling with people. He tabernacled with them. (Rev. 21:3)

As you teach preschoolers about the building of the tabernacle, show them God’s desire to be with His people. Emphasize that Jesus was God’s plan to bring people back to Himself.
The BIBLE STORY

The Tabernacle Was Built

Exodus 35:4–40:38

When Moses was on the mountain with God, God said, “Tell the Israelites to make a tabernacle for Me so that I may be with them.” Then God gave Moses instructions for building the tabernacle, or tent of worship. God told Moses how to build everything that went inside it.

“Make it exactly like I show you,” God said.

So Moses gathered all of the Israelites together. He told them everything God had said, and he asked them to bring materials to build the tabernacle. Everyone who wanted to give brought gold jewelry; blue, purple, and scarlet yarn; fine linen and goat hair; animal skins; wood; oil; spices; and gemstones.

God gave two men, Bezalel (BEHZ uh lehl) and Oholiab (oh HOH lih ab), special skills for building and creating things. Bezalel, Oholiab, and all the skilled people worked together to build the tabernacle for God.

At the same time, people kept bringing offerings of what they had. Pretty soon, the workers came to Moses and said, “The people are bringing more than enough. We don’t need all of this to build the tabernacle as God instructed.” So Moses told the Israelites to stop bringing their offerings.

Everyone working on the tabernacle built it just as God had said. The tabernacle had a wooden frame and places to hang the curtains and the roof of the tent.

Inside the tabernacle, the people made a veil. They made an ark, a table, a lampstand, and many other parts. Every part had its special purpose and was made just as God had said.

When the time came, God told Moses how to set up the tabernacle. God told him how to anoint, or pour oil on, the tabernacle to make it holy. God told Moses to bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the tabernacle. Aaron put on the holy clothing that the workers made, and Moses anointed him to be priest. Aaron’s sons were anointed to serve God as priests too.

Moses did exactly what God commanded, and the tabernacle was finished. God was in a thick cloud. God made a sign for the people: If the cloud covered the tabernacle, the people would stay where they were. When the cloud lifted from the tabernacle, the Israelites would move and take the tabernacle with them. The cloud of the Lord was on the tabernacle during the day, and fire was inside the cloud at night. All of the Israelites could see it as they traveled.

Christ Connection: God told the people of Israel to build a tabernacle. The tabernacle was like a big tent where God met with His people. As part of His plan to save people from sin, God sent Jesus to earth to “tabernacle,” or meet with us.
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Welcome time

“Holy God (Holy, Holy, Holy)” song (on Unit 6 CD, found in your classroom’s CD player)
favorite toys

Play the unit theme song in the background as you greet preschoolers and follow your church’s security procedures. Set out a few favorite theme-related toys, such as puzzles and blocks.

Activity page

The Right Tools” activity page, 1 per child
pencils or crayons

Invite preschoolers to examine each tool. Guide them to draw an X over each tool that would not be used for building.

Say • In today’s Bible story, God told Moses to tell the Israelites to make a tabernacle, or tent of worship. God wanted a place where He could be with His people. God gave Moses very specific instructions for how to build the tabernacle and what it would look like. We will discover more in our Bible story.

Build with blocks

blocks
pillowcases or pieces of fabric or felt (optional)

Provide blocks for the preschoolers to build a tower or a house. You may also provide pillowcases, fabric or felt for preschoolers to drape over the blocks to make “tents.”

SAY • Good job building with the blocks! Today we are going to hear how God told His people to build a tabernacle. The tabernacle was a big tent, and it was a special place where God’s people could meet with Him.

Transition to Bible study

To gain the attention of all the preschoolers to move them to Bible study, flip off the lights or clap a simple rhythm for the children to copy. As preschoolers move to Bible study, give them specific instructions about where and how to sit. Affirm them for following your instructions.
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Small Group ACTIVITIES

Follow instructions
Instruct preschoolers to perform an action while answering the big picture question. Examples of actions include: tiptoeing, bear crawling, jumping up and down, crab walking, walking backwards. Do not be concerned if some preschoolers have trouble completing the action. Encourage them and offer alternative actions if they become frustrated.

Say • Doing some of those actions while trying to remember the big picture answer was hard! Sometimes doing things exactly right is hard. Our big picture question and answer says, Who can keep God’s law? No one can keep God’s law except Jesus. Even when we mess up, God still loves us and wants to be with us. God told His people to build a tabernacle. As part of His plan to save people from sin, God sent Jesus to earth to “tabernacle,” or meet with us.

Search for the tabernacle items
spools of thread or yarn (red, blue, purple)
plastic necklaces
toy gold coins
colorful scarves

Before the session begins, hide spools of thread or yarn without needles, plastic necklaces, toy gold coins, and colorful scarves around the room. Invite the preschoolers to look around the room to find items that could be used to build the tabernacle. Give the children hints and plenty of time to find all the items. When everything has been found, invite the children up individually to place their findings in a basket for the tabernacle.

Say • God told His people to build the tabernacle. The Israelites were so happy to bring gold, jewelry, colored yarn, fine linen, wood, oil, and much more to build the tabernacle! God’s people worked together to build the tabernacle and to honor God. As part of His plan to save people from sin, God sent Jesus to earth to “tabernacle,” or meet with us. When we trust in Jesus, we get to be with Him forever!

Make a picture frame

craft sticks, 4 per child
adhesive plastic jewels
glue
markers
colorful yarn
magnetic tape

Provide the preschoolers with craft sticks, adhesive plastic jewels, glue, markers, colorful yarn, and magnetic tape. Help the children glue their craft sticks in a square shape to make a picture frame. (For younger preschoolers, glue frames together before class.) Invite preschoolers to decorate their frames. Add the magnetic tape to the back of the frames when they have finished.

Say • Many of the items we used to make our picture frames look like the items the Israelites used to build the tabernacle.

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Parachute fun

vinyl parachute or large flat bedsheets

Provide a parachute or a large flat bedsheet. Invite children to stand in a circle, holding tightly to the edge of the sheet or parachute. Instruct them to hold tight to the parachute as they lift their hands over their head when you count to three and quickly walk inside the parachute and sit down under it. Briefly review the Bible story as you sit inside the “tent.” Say • God told His people to build a tabernacle. The tabernacle was like a big tent where God met with His people. As part of His plan to save people from sin, God sent Jesus to earth to “tabernacle,” or meet with us.

Snack and Prayer

Take a restroom break and wash hands or use hand sanitizer. Choose volunteers to help set up for the snack. (Crackers and cups for water located in the cabinet above the sink.) Pray and thank God for the snack.

Remind preschoolers that the tabernacle was a special place where God could meet with His people.

Take prayer requests. Pray for each child by name.

Say • Dear God, thank You for Your holiness. Thank You for wanting to be with Your people, even though we aren’t holy like You. Thank You for sending Jesus to forgive us from our sin so we can be with You forever. Amen.

Pick-Up

At the end of the session, set out markers and let kids work on today’s Bible Story Coloring Page until their parents arrive. When parents arrive to pick up their children, tell them something that their child enjoyed doing or did well today.

Send kids home with any worksheets/crafts and this week’s Big Picture Card.

***Please feel free to use the paper clips & sticky notes provided in the cabinet to keep papers sent home together along with Big Picture cards.