

The Tabernacle

Sunday Plan

SCRIPTURE

Exodus 25; 40

MEMORY VERSE

Exodus 25:8

OPTIONAL VIDEO

The Construction of the Tabernacle

<https://southside.cc/485-415>

God lives with his people.

For the Teacher

Read this before you teach. Last week the kids saw God give his people his commandments at Sinai. Today's lesson is what God does next: he tells his people to build him a tent so he can live with them. The whole book of Exodus has been pointing here. The kids should leave with one idea firmly in place.

KEY TRUTH

God lives with his people.

This is where Exodus has been going. Back in chapter 2, God *heard* his people in Egypt. In chapter 14, he *fought* for them at the sea. In chapter 20, he *gave* them his commandments. And now, in chapters 25 through 40, he *moves in*. The whole arc of the rescue ends with God himself coming to live in the middle of his people's camp. Don't miss the size of that. Exodus 25:8 — "Make a sanctuary for me, that I may dwell among them" — is the line the whole book has been climbing toward.

Dwell is the key word. The Hebrew word means "to settle in, to make a home." God isn't just visiting. He's not far away on a mountain. He's pitching his tent right next to theirs. For grades 2-5 the simplest translation is "live with." That's why the bottom line is "God lives with his people" — it's the present-tense, kid-sized version of *dwell*.

The Tabernacle in one minute. It was a portable tent the Israelites carried with them through the wilderness. Inside the outer courtyard sat the Holy Place (with a lampstand and a table) and behind a heavy curtain sat the Most Holy Place — a smaller inner room holding the Ark of the Covenant. God's presence rested above the ark. The kids don't need every furnishing memorized. They need the shape: *God in the middle of the camp, behind a curtain, dwelling with his people*.

Why the curtain matters. God is holy, and his people are not. The curtain (Exodus 26:33) is both an invitation and a warning: God is *here*, and you cannot just walk in. Hold that in tension. The Tabernacle is the answer to "how can a holy God live with sinful people?" The full answer is Jesus, who tears that curtain on Good Friday — but today, just plant the question.

What we're skipping and why. Exodus 25-40 is sixteen chapters of detailed building instructions, the golden-calf interruption, and the construction itself. The kids don't need any of that detail. We're keeping the spine: God's instructions to build (Exodus 25:8), the furnishings in shorthand, the curtain, and the climax (Exodus 40:34). The golden calf belongs to its own week.

Repeat the bottom line all morning. Say it at least six times. Have the kids say it back. Write it on the board. End with it.

MATERIALS

- Bibles for every student
- Whiteboard or large paper, markers
- Pencils, crayons or colored pencils
- A small blanket or sheet (to drape as a curtain — optional)
- A small lamp or battery candle (for the object lesson)
- Activity sheets (printed in advance from this week's activities — pick what you'll use)

1. Gather

Welcome the kids back. Tell them today picks up after last week's story at Sinai. God has just given his people his commandments. There's a lot more he wants to do with them — and the very first thing is to come and live with them.

ASK

Where do you go to be close to someone you love? A parent, a grandparent, a best friend?

Let two or three kids answer. Steer them toward concrete answers — their kitchen, the couch, grandma’s porch. Then tell them: today we’re going to learn that God wanted a place to be close to *his* people. He wanted to live right in the middle of them.

Write the bottom line on the board:

SAY

God lives with his people.

2. The Story

Setting the Stage

Tell them, in your own words: God’s people had been camped at Mount Sinai. They’d seen the thunder, heard the commandments, and now God is going to ask them to build something. Not a palace. Not a temple. A tent. A tent so that the God of the universe can come live right in the middle of their camp.

The Instructions

Have everyone open to Exodus 25. Pick a confident reader.

Exodus 25:1–2, 8–9

DISCUSSION

1. Look at verse 8. Why does God want his people to make him a sanctuary?

→ *So that he may dwell — live — among them. Don’t move past this word too fast. “Dwell” means to live with, to settle in, to make a home. God isn’t visiting. He’s moving in.*

2. Where had God been talking to Moses up to this point?

→ *Up on top of Mount Sinai — far away, with thunder and smoke. Now he’s saying he wants to live down in the camp, right next to everyone’s tents.*

Stop and feel the size of this. The God who made the stars and the oceans and every animal in every forest just told his people to build him a tent so he could live with them. Say the bottom line out loud here, and have the kids say it back: *God lives with his people.*

Inside the Tent

Now sketch the Tabernacle on the board, very simply, as you talk. Three boxes nested inside each other: the outer courtyard, the Holy Place, and the Most Holy Place. Don’t get fancy. Stick figures and boxes are fine.

Have a different student read the next part:

Exodus 26:33

ASK

What did the curtain do?

It separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. The Most Holy Place was where God’s presence rested above the Ark of the Covenant.

SAY

Here's the tension. God wanted to live with his people — that's why he asked for the tent. But God is holy, and his people were not. The curtain was a sign of both things at once: God is here, and you cannot just walk in. We'll come back to that curtain in another lesson, because the story isn't finished. But for today, remember both: God came close, and God is holy.

The Glory Fills the Tent

This is the climax. Have everyone turn to the very last chapter of Exodus.

Exodus 40:34–35**DISCUSSION**

1. What filled the Tabernacle?

→ The glory of the LORD. The cloud — the same cloud that led them through the wilderness — settled on the tent. God moved in.

2. Could even Moses go inside?

→ No. Verse 35 says Moses couldn't enter because the cloud was so thick and the glory of the LORD was so heavy. God's presence was real and near and powerful.

3. The whole book of Exodus started with God's people crying out in Egypt. How does it end?

→ With God himself living in the middle of his people's camp. That's the answer to the cry. God didn't just rescue them. He came to live with them.

3. The Point

Say the bottom line again, with the kids:

SAY

God lives with his people.

The Lamp Object Lesson

Hold up the small lamp or battery candle. Turn it on.

SAY

Imagine your whole house is dark, and you set this little light down in the living room. The light doesn't stay in one corner — it fills the room. That's what God's glory did when it came into the Tabernacle. He didn't just stop by. He filled the whole tent. And that's what God still wants — not to be far away, but to fill the place where his people live.

The Memory Verse

Have everyone turn to Exodus 25:8. Read it together:

SCRIPTURE

Exodus 25:8

Make a sanctuary for me, that I may dwell among them.

Read it together three ways: all together normally, all together in a whisper, then once with their hands cupped together like they're holding something precious.

SAY

That word “dwell” is the most important word in the verse. God didn’t say, “Build me a sanctuary so I can visit.” He said, “Build me a sanctuary so I can dwell — so I can live with you.” We love this verse because it tells us what kind of God we have. God lives with his people.

What This Means For Us**DISCUSSION**

1. The Tabernacle was a tent in the wilderness a long, long time ago. Where does God live with his people today?

→ *In the church, in our hearts through Jesus, with us by his Holy Spirit. Don’t rush — let the kids work it out. The honest first answer is often “in heaven,” which is fine; gently push them to “and also right here, with us, all the time.”*

2. What’s something you do during the week that helps you remember God is right there with you?

→ *Listen for: praying, reading the Bible, singing songs, talking to God when something is hard. Specifics matter more than perfect answers.*

Closing Prayer**PRAY**

God, thank you for being the kind of God who doesn’t stay far away. You told your people to build you a tent so you could live with them in the wilderness. Today you live with us through Jesus and your Holy Spirit. Help us remember, this week at school and at home, that you are right here with us. We don’t have to go anywhere to find you. You came to live with your people. Amen.

4. The Work

Pick one or more activities from this week’s menu. Print enough copies for each kid in advance. The kids don’t have to do all of them — pick what fits the group’s energy and what time you have left.

The menu for this week:

- **God’s Tent** — coloring page of the Tabernacle in the camp with the cloud above it.
- **Inside the Tent** — word search with words from the Tabernacle story (includes a sneak peek of next week).
- **Where God Lives With Me** — drawing prompt connecting the lesson to a place in the kid’s own week.
- **Remember the Tent** — fill-in-the-blanks recall using the kids’ Bibles.

The full production specs for each activity are in this week’s activities file.

NOTE

While the kids work, sit with them. Ask one or two what they’re working on. Reinforce the bottom line one more time before class ends.

What Comes Next Week

The end of the Exodus story and a step back: how the rescued people of God live as God's own — and a look ahead at how the whole Tabernacle picture finds its true answer in Jesus, who came to dwell with us.