Preschool–Grade 6

The Ark of the Covenant

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: God wants to meet with His people. He set the way to come to Him, and the right answer is to do it His way.
Bible passage: Exodus 25:1–22. Students read Exodus 25:8–22 out loud themselves.
Memory verse: "And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel." *Exodus 25:22 (KJV)* and "According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it." *Exodus 25:9 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.
Before class: read Exodus 25:1–22, 37:1–9 and 40:20–21. Write both memory verses on the board. Decide who reads which verses, or go around the room a few verses each.

1. Opening game: Follow the Pattern (5–10 minutes)

Pair students back to back. One student draws a simple design of five shapes without showing it. They describe it to their partner, who draws it from the words alone. Compare. Then switch, but this time the drawer may ask questions. Ask: *What made it hard to copy exactly? What helped?* Say: "Today God gives Moses a pattern for the most important piece in the tabernacle, and He says, 'even so shall ye make it.'"

2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Read out loud: Exodus 25:8–22. Students take turns, a few verses each. Old words in this passage:

- **sanctuary** (25:8): a holy place; **dwell**: live
- **pattern** (25:9): the exact design God showed; **instruments**: the furniture and tools
- **shittim wood** (25:10): a kind of wood; a **cubit** is about 18 inches, so the ark was about 45 inches long, 27 wide and 27 high
- **overlay** (25:11): cover; **crown of gold round about**: a gold border all around
- **cast** (25:12): poured into a mold; **staves** (25:13): carrying poles; **borne** (25:14): carried
- **testimony** (25:16): what God would give; Exodus 31:18 says it was the two tables of stone
- **mercy seat** (25:17): the gold lid on top of the ark; **beaten work** (25:18): hammered out of the gold
- **commune** (25:22): talk together

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Tell the rest in your own words: God gave Moses these words while Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights (Exodus 24:18). When God finished speaking with him, He gave Moses "two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God" (31:18). Later Bezaleel made the ark of shittim wood, the mercy seat and the two cherubims exactly as God had said, and "the cherubims spread out their wings on high" (37:1–9). Moses put the testimony into the ark, set the staves on it, put the mercy seat above upon the ark, and brought it into the tabernacle, "as the LORD commanded Moses" (40:20–21). The Bible later calls it "the ark of the covenant of the LORD" (Numbers 10:33). A **covenant** is a solemn promise between God and His people.

3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. God told Moses to make everything "after the pattern" (25:9; 25:40). Why do you think God cared about the exact details? Are there things today where God has told us exactly how to come to Him?
2. The ark was gold "within and without" (25:11), even inside where no one looked. What would it mean for your life to be the same inside as outside?
3. The staves "shall not be taken from it" (25:15). The ark was always ready to be carried. What does it look like to be ready to go where God leads?
4. God's law, the testimony, was inside the ark, under the mercy seat (25:21). What do you think it means that God's law and God's mercy were together in one place?
5. God said, "there I will meet with thee" (25:22). Moses met with God at one place. Read Hebrews 4:16. How is it different for us now?
6. Do you set a time and place to meet with God? What gets in the way?

4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Old words: **thee** means you; **commune** means talk together; **shew** is the old spelling of show; **instruments** are the furniture and tools; **even so** means exactly that way. Point out that 25:9 comes first: God's way of making it, then God's promise to meet.

Read both verses together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say Exodus 25:22 this week; keep working on 25:9 next week too.

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5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "God met with Moses above the mercy seat. Then God came Himself: 'the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us' (John 1:14, KJV). God loves you, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God who came as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). God set the way to come to Him, just as He set the pattern for the ark, and we obey the gospel the way Peter preached it: 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) We **repent**, turning from sin, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the Holy Ghost, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5). 'Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.' (Hebrews 4:16, KJV)"
Pray with the students, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. Where am I doing things my way instead of God's way?
2. When and where will I meet with God each day this week?
3. Write a short prayer thanking God for His mercy.
   If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: set a time each day to meet with God. Read a few verses, then pray about what you read.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You that You want to meet with Your people, and that You came to us in Jesus. Help us come to You Your way, and live the same inside and out. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a student asks what else was in the ark: Exodus 40:20 says Moses put the testimony into the ark. Hebrews 9:4 also names "the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant." Stay with what the text says.
If a student asks where the ark is now: the Bible doesn't tell us. Today God dwells in His people by His Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16).

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