Preschool–Grade 6

The Tabernacle

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

Main point: The holy God wants to dwell among His people. He wants willing hearts, and He wants things done His way.
Bible passage: Exodus 25:1–9 and 40:33–38. Students read both passages out loud themselves.
Memory verse: "And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them." *Exodus 25:8 (KJV)* and "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" *1 Corinthians 3:16 (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 24:15–18, 25:1–9, 35:20–36:7, 39:42–43 and 40:16–38. Write both memory verses on the board.

1. Opening game: Have To or Want To? (5–10 minutes)

Name one side of the room "have to" and the other "want to." Read each one, and students walk to the side that fits them best: 1) cleaning your room, 2) helping a friend move, 3) giving part of your birthday money, 4) practicing an instrument, 5) going to church. Ask: *Does it change anything when you do something because you want to, not because you have to?* Say: "God asked for an offering, but only one kind. Let's read it."

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

Read out loud: Exodus 25:1–9. Students take turns, a verse or two each. Old words in this passage:

- **willingly with his heart** (25:2): freely, because he wants to
- **brass** (25:3): a strong yellow-brown metal
- **scarlet** (25:4): bright red; **fine linen**: thin, fine white cloth
- **shittim wood** (25:5): a strong wood
- **ephod** and **breastplate** (25:7): parts of the high priest's holy clothes
- **sanctuary** (25:8): a holy place set apart for God; **dwell**: live
- **pattern** (25:9): the exact plan; **instruments**: the things used in it; **even so**: just like it

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Tell the middle part in your own words: the people whose hearts made them willing, men and women, brought their offerings (35:21–22, 35:29). They kept bringing free offerings every morning, until the workers said, "The people bring much more than enough," and Moses told them to stop (36:3–7). They made everything as the LORD commanded, and Moses blessed them (39:42–43). "Thus did Moses: according to all that the LORD commanded him, so did he" (40:16).
Read out loud: Exodus 40:33–38. Old words in this passage:

- **reared up** (40:33): set up; **the court**: the fenced yard of linen hangings around the tabernacle
- **the tent of the congregation** (40:34): the meeting tent, where God met with His people
- **the glory of the LORD** (40:34): God's great and holy presence
- **abode thereon** (40:35): stayed on it; **taken up** (40:36): lifted off

Look closer. Point out these details with the class:

- **God wanted hearts, not just stuff.** He took the offering only "of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart" (25:2). Paul says the same: "God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7).
- **God's way, every detail.** "According to all that I shew thee... even so shall ye make it" (25:9), and they did (39:43).
- **God moved in.** The work was finished, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle (40:33–34). The cloud then led every step of their journeys (40:36–38).
- **God still wants to dwell with His people.** Jesus, the Word made flesh, "dwelt among us" (John 1:14). Paul tells believers, "ye are the temple of God" (1 Corinthians 3:16).

3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. Why do you think God wanted only willing offerings (25:2)? What is the difference between giving and giving willingly?
2. The people had to be told to stop giving (36:5–7). What would make people that eager to give to God?
3. God gave Moses an exact pattern (25:9). Why does doing it God's way matter more than doing it our own way?
4. Moses couldn't even enter because of God's glory (40:35). What does that teach you about how holy God is?
5. Israel waited when the cloud stayed and moved when it moved (40:36–37). Where do you need to wait on God, or move when He leads?
6. 1 Corinthians 3:16 says believers are the temple of God. How should knowing that change the way you live?

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4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Old words: **sanctuary** means a holy place for God; **dwell** and **dwelleth** mean live and lives; **know ye not** means don't you know; **temple** means God's house.
Read both verses together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say Exodus 25:8 this week; keep working on 1 Corinthians 3:16 next week too.

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

Say: "God filled the tabernacle with His glory, and He wants to fill you with His Spirit. 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) and dwelt among us (John 1:14). '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). 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)."
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. What is something I could give to God willingly this week (time, help, money, a talent)?
2. Where am I doing things my own way instead of God's way?
3. Write a short prayer thanking God that He wants to dwell with His people, and asking Him to lead you like the cloud led Israel.
   If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: give the thing from question 1 gladly, without being asked.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, You are holy, and still You want to dwell with Your people. Give us willing hearts, help us do things Your way, and lead us every step like You led Israel. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a student asks about the furniture inside: God gave Moses the pattern for an ark, a table and a candlestick (Exodus 25:10–40). This lesson stays with the offering and the cloud; the inside is a lesson for another day.

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