

From Grace to Glory: A Journey for Builders

Bible Study Lesson Teaching Guide

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Introduction

(Based on material from the foreword: The Tabernacle in the Wilderness)

1. Give a brief overview of the building project (or financial challenge) that has been undertaken by your church. (You may want to enlist a member of the building committee or church staff to give this presentation.)
2. Allow time for questions and discussion.
3. Then state that “This project is our ‘Tabernacle in the Wilderness’ that allows us to learn from the experience of the Israelites in the last part of the book of Exodus.”
4. Ask members to name the key events in Exodus that led up to the building of the tabernacle in Exodus 25. For example:
 - a. Israel's oppression in Egypt.
 - b. The birth and preparation of Moses.
 - c. The burning bush revelation.
 - d. The long and tragic contest with Pharaoh.
 - e. The exodus.
 - f. The parting of the Red Sea.
 - g. The miracles in the desert.
 - h. The giving of the law and covenant.
 - i. The apostasy and reconciliation of the people.
 - j. Moses' intercession for Israel.
 - k. Moses' mysterious encounter with God.
5. Then ask members to compare the importance of the building of the tabernacle with these events. (Share that over one-fourth of Exodus is devoted to this building process.) Then share, “It seems that everything else was preparing them for building a place where God could dwell among his people.”
6. Ask members to share some of the major events in the history of this church that have preceded this particular building project. After these have been shared, ask the question, “How important do you consider this project to be in relation to other events in the life of this church?” Share the following: “Your church's vision and challenge is an expression of gratitude for God's grace, and a desire to build a new facility to the glory of God.”
7. Then read the final paragraph from the foreword and lead in a time of prayer that God would lead each of us to have “willing hearts both to give and to work.”

Lesson One

Planning: "Make Me a Sanctuary"

1. Share the following quote from Charles Kettering: "I plan to spend the rest of my life in the future, so I want to know what it will be. That's why I plan." Ask members to share examples of how the plan that their church has determined reflects its desire to live in the future.
2. Give a brief summary of the background information related to Exodus 25:8-9. Then read these verses and ask the question, "According to these verses, who was to be the architect for this project?"
3. Lead members in a time of discussion about why they think it was so important for the Israelites to adhere so closely to God's divine plan for this tabernacle. Then read I Corinthians 3:10-16 and ask members to discuss the importance of close adherence to God's divine plan for our lives as well.
4. The author states, "By now, Moses and the people knew a lot about this divine architect they had not known a year earlier." Review the list from the introduction section of this study guide for a reminder of what they knew about God.
5. Remind members of their discussion related to what they remembered about what God has done for this church in the past. Then ask the question, As you reflect upon all that God has done for you and his people through the ages, why should you doubt that he can accomplish what he has planned for you?
6. Then ask members to discuss the following question: But why did God want Israel to build him a sanctuary? After a time of discussion read Exodus 25:8 and 29:45-46.
7. Share background information about the tabernacle before saying, "This portable tent was a sign of God's continuing presence with his people." Then ask, What is God's sign for us today? (The Holy Spirit.) Lead members to discuss the following question, In light of this, what is the purpose of our new building? (To symbolize God's presence in your church fellowship.)
8. Enlist someone to give a brief report about the Ark of the Covenant. They can refer to the information in the lesson material. Ask them to also mention the other items of furniture as ordered by God. (Use pictures at this point if you have them.)
9. Then lead members to discuss the questions, "What is the most important purpose of our church? What is at the center of our lives?"
10. If possible, display an illustration of the tabernacle as you share information about its dimensions and symmetry.
11. Read the concluding paragraph from this lesson as a closing challenge for members to prayerfully consider their participation in the "serious business" at hand.

Lesson Two

Giving: "Bring an Offering to the Lord"

1. Begin with a reading of Exodus 35:21 which says, "And everyone who was willing, and whose heart moved him came and brought an offering to the Lord for the work of the tabernacle of meeting, for all its service, and for the holy garments."
2. Also share the following quote from the background material, "And they kept coming in long lines, all day long, they kept coming, they kept giving. There was no hesitation, no delay, no arguments. No one scoffed at the idea of a 'House of God.' All seemed to see the appropriateness, even the necessity, of such a structure." Then ask members to discuss the following questions:
 - a. Have you ever witnessed this type of giving in your church experience?
 - b. What do you think would be required before such an experience could occur in this church in response to this particular building and giving emphasis?
3. After a time of discussion share that we will now try to determine what factors contributed to this glorious response of giving by the children of Israel. It will also be our goal to determine ways to apply these factors to our own time of giving.
4. You may want to prepare a visual (poster or power point) of each of the factors as they are shared. State the contributing factor and then discuss the related questions.
5. Factor #1 - "There is no hidden agenda with God, he is always open and up front about what he wants us to do and what we can expect him to do."
 - a. In what way does Exodus 25:2 illustrate this factor?
 - b. Can you think of other examples of God's openness with His people?
 - c. What can be done to insure openness during our emphasis?
6. Factor #2 - God provided more than adequate information about the project.
 - a. Why do you think that God provided such lengthy and detailed instructions?
 - b. What do you recall from our previous session about this factor?
 - c. What suggestions would you make to insure effective communication related to this project?
7. Factor #3 - God made a clear call for the offering.
 - a. What are the similarities between Exodus 25:1-9 and 35:1-9?
 - b. In light of all that God had done for Israel, why did he express a need for anything from the Israelites? In light of all that God has done for our church, do you feel that this offering is an opportunity for you to do your part?
 - c. What are the three aspects of the appeal in Exodus 35:4-5?

- (1) Total participation - In what way can we help to insure total participation in our project?
 - (2) Divine instruction - Have we done a good job in sharing with our people that this request for funds is a result of much prayer and careful deliberation to determine the will of God for our church?
 - (3) Voluntary response - What can we do to avoid feelings of manipulation or force related to this offering?
8. Factor #4 - Trust was placed in the people to do the right thing.
 - a. What do you think was going on in the minds of the people after they left Moses?
 - b. Why do you think that Moses was able to be so patient about this?
 - c. What suggestions would you make for helping us to demonstrate a similar trust in God and in our people during this campaign?
9. Then return to the response of the people as discussed at the beginning of this session with the following questions:
 - a. "Where did the Israelites get their expensive jewelry and fine fabrics?"
 - b. What should the people have realized about these possessions?
 - c. In a similar way God has given us all that we have and knows that we already have all that is needed for this project. Are you prepared to think in this way about your possessions?
10. Then read Exodus 36:3-7 and ask members what can be learned from this wonderful example given to us by the children of Israel? (Share the four characteristics from the background material if they are not mentioned.)
11. If time allows, close with the learning activity at the conclusion of this session from the background material. Pray for a repeat of "The Strangest Day in the History of Religion" in your church.

Lesson Three

Building: “Come and Do the Work”

1. Begin by reading Exodus 36:2 and ask members to listen for the qualifications listed for those who would do the work on the tabernacle. Write these on the board as they are shared. For example:
 - a. Gifted artisan.
 - b. Hearts with God-given wisdom.
 - c. Hearts stirred by God.
2. Then ask members to relate each of these to their own response to this building project. Some of the ideas that may be shared during this time of discussion include:
 - a. Serving on various committees related to the actual building project.
 - b. Joining in prayer groups for leaders and workers that they might receive a word from God related to this project.
 - c. Participating in various support ministries related to the project as a joyful volunteer.
3. Share background information about Bezalel as an example of the gifted artisan. Also focus on the phrase, “And all the skillful men among those who were performing the work made the tabernacle,” as examples of all others who were involved in the building of the tabernacle. Point out the value and importance to God of everyone involved in this project. Challenge members to consider the value of whatever part they may be led to perform.
4. Prepare a poster or display of the listing showing the order of construction of the tabernacle with each of the eleven steps and the related Scripture verses as found in the background material. Discuss the question, “In what way does the order of construction symbolize redemption and worship in man’s experience with God?” (See the background material for related information.)
5. Share with members that the time of erecting the tabernacle was a reminder of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage. Ask members to discuss in what ways this new building can serve as an opportunity to celebrate a new beginning in the life of this church.
6. Ask, “The immediate use of the temple by the people was blessed by what wonderful event?” (The cloud covered the tabernacle as a “visible sign of the Lord’s presence with his people.”)
7. Ask members to try to imagine what the people must have felt when they realized that the promise given by God to the patriarchs to be their God had finally been fulfilled. Allow time for each participant to share with one other person a time in their life when they experienced an unusual awareness of a fulfilled promise from God. What was their response? For the Israelites it was a time of “Doxology.” (Share information about the Hebrew and Greek words for glory.) If time allows, you may want to discuss the questions related to the “Experiencing His Presence” section at the end of the background material.

8. Share the statement; “The wilderness journey of Israel is a symbolic allegory of the journey of life, especially the life of the church.” Lead members in a time of discussion related to the great lessons from this allegory as shared in the background information. Use the following suggested discussion questions:
 - a. “To be truly lived, life must be regarded as a progress towards an end.” (To what end is your life being led by God? To what end is your church being led by God?)
 - b. “Difficulty, trial, delay, and work prepare the soul for larger service. (What are some of these types of experiences that you have witnessed in the life of this church? In your life?)
 - c. “The needs of life, both temporal and spiritual, are available through divine providence.” (In what ways has God met the needs of your life and the needs of your church?)
 - d. “Obedience to the eternal law is the essential condition for attaining true success.” (In what ways can your life be used to demonstrate this truth? In what ways has your church been obedient to God in relation to this particular project?)
9. If time allows, ask members to share ways in which “the tabernacle is the Old Testament’s principal forerunner of the New Testament doctrine of Incarnation.” (See the material in the afterword for this information.)