

WELCOME (15 minutes)

- **Ice Breaker:** Did you grow up in a home in which an adult was skilled at a craft that included following a pattern? What was the skill? Did you learn this craft from them?

WORSHIP (10 minutes)

- Sing #3, "Build Your Kingdom Here" from the **2016 Small Group Worship CD**.

WIN (15 minutes)

- **PRAY** for your list of people who need to know Jesus as their Savior!
- **PLAN** something to do to reach out together to these people. (*SuperBowl?*)

WORD (25 minutes)

Read: In this session, the concept of following a pattern comes into focus as we consider the tabernacle that the Israelites constructed at Mount Sinai. We'll see the divine design of God's plan for the tabernacle and how He used His people to build it. Then we'll see how the tabernacle itself was a pattern that pointed to something future. According to the New Testament writers, God sent His Son to earth, God in the flesh, to "tabernacle" with us. Further, as the people in whom God's presence dwells, believers today serve as mini-tabernacles, manifesting His presence in the world in which we live.

Have everyone open their Bibles to Exodus 25.

Point #1 – God planned the tabernacle for His people – Read Ex 25:1-9.

Read: "God's promise of giving His powerful presence to Israel – that is, coming down to actually live among them – is one of the most significant promises in the Scriptures and it will echo throughout all the rest of the Story." – J. Scott Duvall & J. Daniel Hays

Discuss: God asked for a tabernacle – a sacred tent – to be constructed as the place where His presence would be manifested. This would make it possible for a holy God to dwell among His people! The Israelites understood – as we do – that God's presence is everywhere; He is omnipresent, in the classic language of theology. Yet God chooses to manifest His presence, open to the senses, among human beings in specific times and places. In a way, the tabernacle was merely a spectacularly odd tent with some very expensive furniture. What made it a sanctuary, a "holy place", was that "the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle" (Ex 40:34). Why do you think God wanted the offerings to be voluntary? What would a stingy spirit or withholding materials have communicated about the people's response to God's desire to be with His people?

Point #2 – God built the tabernacle through His people – Read Ex 39:32-43

Read: “The tabernacle, like the later temple, is a sign of God’s presence with Israel. It announces His intention for His glory to dwell among His people. It foreshadows the incarnation of the Logos (John 1:14) and God’s majestic presence that will come to earth in the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21-22)” – Michael Bird

Discuss: On the one hand, the tabernacle was the place where God redeemed and therefore holy people could encounter His presence with great confidence and joy. On the other hand, the tabernacle was a place to remind the people that they were sinful. The atonement sacrifices offered constantly reminded the people of their need for God’s provision for their sins. In what ways do you approach God as one needing to repent often for your sins? In what ways do you approach God as one whom He has redeemed and thus has set apart as holy?

Read: “Five facts point to the tabernacles’ importance: First, the description of its construction dominates more space than any other issue in the book of Exodus and in all the Pentateuch the space devoted to the tabernacle is about 50 chapters. Second, the tabernacle was the holy location of Israelite worship for almost 500 years. Third, the tabernacle was the main representation of the Lord’s presence among His people. Fourth, the tabernacle’s design and furniture illustrate some major themes of biblical theology and worship, like God’s holiness and the necessity of atonement for sin. Fifth, the tabernacle was the center of the worship and life of God’s people. The 12 tribes of Israel encamped with the tabernacle in the center of the camp. – Allan Moseley

Point #3 – God filled the tabernacle with His presence– Read Ex 40:34-38

Discuss: Moses had a continuing desire to see God’s glory (Ex 33:18). God gave Moses a partial display of His glory – “you will see My back, but My face will not be seen” (33:23). Yet, in Exodus 40, with God’s glory filling the tabernacle, even Moses was unable to enter. How would God’s presence filling the tabernacle have affected your understanding of God’s character? Of His greatness?

Read: “God wants worshippers before workers; indeed the only acceptable workers are those who have learned the lost art of worship.” – A.W. Tozer (1897 – 1963)

Discuss: The entire tabernacle section of Exodus, but particularly these concluding verses, proves conclusively that God wanted to be with His people, and He wanted them to know that He was with them. The same is true today. The greatest evidence of this truth is the incarnation – God Himself took on human form. What does God’s presence among the Israelites teach you about His desire to dwell among you and your fellow Christians?

For next time encourage your people to read Leviticus 1-4.

WORKS (25 minutes)

- Break into smaller groups of **2 or 3’s of the same gender** to pray for each other.