STORIES AND RITUALS

LESSON 8

Stories & Rituals: The Bible in Broad Strokes

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Solomon Builds the Temple

Texts: **1 Kings 5-8**

Big Idea: **We seek time and space to encounter God.**

Lesson Objectives

Participants will:

1. Perform an act of teamwork by working with a group to reconstruct a famous building.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of creating time and space for God's presence by hearing a re-telling of the story of Solomon.
3. Identify ways that they seek time and space to encounter God by creating a collaborative art project.

ACTIVITY (TIME)	MATERIALS NEEDED
Dive In (10 minutes) **Group Check-In**	• Nothing
Community Builder (15 minutes) **Building Together**	• Spaghetti noodles • Mini marshmallows • Photos of famous buildings
The Story (15 minutes) **Solomon Builds the Temple**	• Copy of Lesson Sheet 8.1
The Ritual (15 minutes) **Temples for God**	• Soft, instrumental music (optional) • Method for playing music (optional) • Lesson Sheet 8.2 • Pens or pencils • Markers • Tape
Dig Deeper (10 minutes) **Temples around the World**	• Pens or pencils • Paper • Tablets, smartphones, or other devices that can access the Internet
Wrap it Up (5 minutes) **Closing Prayer**	• Nothing

LESSON OVERVIEW

What's the Story?

Today's story, taken from 1 Kings 5-8, tells the story of King Solomon building the temple in Jerusalem. Building this temple fulfilled the dream of King David before him, creating a place where people could go to worship and experience God's presence.

Building the Temple was not an easy task. This temple itself would have been approximately 90 feet long, 30 feet wide and 45 feet tall. Elaborate decorations and furnishings were found in a building with many different parts and chambers. The Ark of the Covenant, a reminder to the people of God's covenant with them, was stored in the inner part of the Temple. After building the temple, Solomon prayed a prayer of thanksgiving and blessing on the Temple, inviting God's presence into the sanctuary.

The Temple in Jerusalem became a very important building in the life of God's people. Until its destruction by the Babylonians in 586 BCE, this building was used for prayer, praise, and worship. People would enter the temple in order to seek God's presence in their lives.

What's the "Big Idea?"

Today's lesson focuses on the big idea that *we seek time and space to encounter God.* As people of faith, we long for God's presence in our lives. Sometimes, we set aside time and places to experience this presence. We build places where we center our lives of worship and praise, and we set aside time in our schedules to participate in worship, Bible study, and prayer. Today's story and ritual will invite participants to think about what it means to seek time and space to encounter God's presence in their lives.

What's the Symbol?

We use many different materials to build places where we worship God. Solomon used different kinds of stone, bricks, wood, and other furnishings to build the temple. Gather some bricks, rocks, tools, and other materials needed for building to display for your group.

What's the Ritual?

Today's ritual will invite participants to think about how they set aside time and space to encounter God's presence in their lives. Then, they will write their thoughts on "bricks" that will be used to create a structure on a wall or banner of paper.

Setting Up Your Space

Set up your "altar" area. Set up a table and cover it with fabric or linen. On the table, place a few candles and a large cross. Also, place the symbols for this lesson: bricks, stones, and other building tools. Clear a large space on a wall to use during the ritual (or hang up a large poster or banner of paper). Have materials for the ritual and community builder ready for use nearby.

DIVE IN
(10 MINUTES)

Group Check-In

Materials:

- Nothing

During the session:

- Open your session with a quick prayer. Use this one or a prayer of your own:
  Holy Lord, open our eyes, ears, and hearts to see your love and faithfulness in the world around us. Help us see your love for us in your Word. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.
- **Let's start our time together by sharing some of the great and not-so-great things that have happened to us this week. What were the high points and low points of your week?**
  Go around the group and invite everyone to share.

COMMUNITY BUILDER
(15 MINUTES)

Building Together

Materials:

- Spaghetti noodles
- Mini marshmallows
- Photos of famous buildings

Before the session:

- Search for and print photos of various famous buildings. (Examples include the Eiffel Tower, Empire State Building, Chrysler Building, Big Ben, Great Wall of China, etc.) You should have one photo for every 3-4 participants.

During the session:

- Show the group some pictures of the famous buildings. Say: **Have you ever seen any of these famous buildings? How hard do you think it was to build these?** *[Answers will vary.]*
- **Today we're going to try to build some of these.** Split the group into small groups of three or four participants each.
- Give each group a photo, a handful of spaghetti noodles, and a bowl of marshmallows. **Your job is to work as a team to reconstruct the famous building in your picture using only spaghetti noodles and mini marshmallows. You can break the noodles and arrange them however you want, but you can only use the noodles and the marshmallows.**
- Give groups about 10 minutes to build their structures. When groups are finished, invite them to share their structures with the group.
- **Was it easy or hard to build your structures? Was it easy or hard to work with others to accomplish your task?** *[Answers will vary.]*

THE STORY (15 MINUTES)

Solomon Builds the Temple

Materials:

- Copy of Lesson Sheet 8.1

Before the session:

- Make a copy of Lesson Sheet 8.1
- Practice reading through the story several times so you are familiar with it.

During the session:

- Tell the story on Lesson Sheet 8.1.
- **After the story, ask: What is this story telling us about God?** *[Answers will vary, but may include: God is present in holy spaces; God is present in God's holy house.]*
- **What is this story telling us about humanity?** *[Answers will vary, but may include: As we seek God, we set aside time, energy, and resources to find God's presence; we set aside space as holy and in which we worship and honor God.]*
- **What is this story telling us about the world?** *[Answers will vary, but may include: The world is full of holy spaces; the world is full of places where we seek for and encounter God.]*
- **King David dreamed of building a place where people could worship and encounter God. King Solomon, David's son, made this dream a reality by building the temple. The temple in Jerusalem became a holy place where people could go to seek and experience God's presence.**

THE RITUAL (15 MINUTES)

Temples for God

Materials:

- Soft, instrumental music (optional)
- Method for playing music (optional)
- Tape
- Markers
- Copies of Lesson Sheet 8.2
- Pens or pencils
- Scissors
- Banner of paper or poster board (optional)

Before the session:

- Make a copy of Lesson Sheet 8.2 for each participant.
- Secure a large space of wall on which participants can tape their bricks. If blank wall space isn't possible, have everyone tape their bricks onto a large banner of paper or poster board.

During the session:

- If you are playing music, begin playing it softly.
- **King Solomon built a temple where people could set aside time and space to encounter God. We set aside time and space to encounter God, too. Today, we are going to take some time to think about how we set aside time and space when we seek God's presence.**
- Hand each person a copy of Lesson Sheet 8.2. **We construct spaces to encounter God with building materials like bricks. But, we don't always have to build grand temples like Solomon to set aside time and space to spend time with God.**
- **Think about some of the ways that you create time and space to encounter God. Maybe you pray in the morning when you wake up. Maybe you go on walks. Maybe you listen to worship music while you are in the car. Write some of these things on the bricks you have been given.**
- Give participants some time to write their thoughts. Invite everyone to cut out their bricks.
- **Together, we are going to "build" a structure that will remind us of all these ways we encounter God. One at a time, I invite you to come forward and tape your bricks to our wall. As you tape your bricks, thank God for these opportunities to encounter God's presence.**
- Invite individuals forward to tape their bricks. As bricks are taped, invite everyone to share what they have written. You may wish to demonstrate this process by sharing your bricks first.
- **There are many different ways that we seek time and space to encounter God's presence in our lives. What is important is that we take the time to follow through with these practices and activities.**
- If you are able, leave the structure up for a few weeks. Invite the group to continue adding to it as they think of new ways that they can seek time and space to encounter God.

DIG DEEPER
(10 MINUTES)

Temples around the World

Materials:

- Pens or pencils (optional)
- Paper (optional)
- Tablets, smartphones, or other devices that can access the Internet.

During the session:

- **All around the world there are places that people have built and use to encounter God's presence. Let's discover what some of these temples look like.**
- Split the group into pairs. Invite them to use tablets, smartphones, and other devices to research different types of temples and church buildings. Have each group find different images, facts, and stories to share with the group. If desired, hand out paper, pencils, and pens for pairs to take notes.
- **What are some of the things you have discovered? What are some of the ways that people have created space to encounter God?** Invite responses from the group.
- **How are these temples similar to the temples we create? How are they different?** *[Answers will vary. Be sure to include in the discussion that no matter what the temple looks like, its purpose is the same: to provide people with a place to go to encounter God's presence.]*

WRAP IT UP
(5 MINUTES)

Closing Prayer

Invite the group to share any prayer concerns or requests they may have for the week.
Close your time together in prayer. Use the following or pray your own prayer:

Lord God, Solomon built a home in which people could seek and praise you. Grant us the patience and desire to set aside time and space every day, so that we may discover your presence in our lives. We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Lesson Sheet 8.1

Solomon Builds the Temple

Upon King David's death, Solomon, his son took the throne. Now, Solomon was known for his wisdom and leadership, and he became a great king of Israel.

Solomon sought after God just as his father did. He desired to build a space in Jerusalem where people could take time to discover and be present with God. He decided to build a temple in Jerusalem, something his father couldn't do during times of war. Solomon lived during times of peace, and he was able to complete his father's vision. Solomon told of his plan to king Hiram of Tyre, and Hiram agreed to help him build this place.

Solomon called thousands of workers to complete the construction of the temple. These workers quarried beautiful stone and sent the finest wood to build the large, grand space. Many floors and rooms were built; places where people could go to find and experience God.

Solomon finished the grand temple. In the center of this temple was the inner sanctuary, the place where God's covenant to the people was to be stored. He covered the whole place in gold, building it to be perfect. Bronze work and wood carvings adorned the space. Creating this sacred space didn't happen overnight; it took seven years for Solomon to complete this task.

After the temple was completed, Solomon brought together all of the leaders of Israel and its tribes in order to dedicate the space. The priests brought to the temple the Ark of the Covenant, the thing that reminded the people of the promises God made them years ago and guided them in their relationship of love and faithfulness. They brought this holy article to the temple, along with all of the vessels that came with the ark.

Everyone present sacrificed animals as signs of worship and thanksgiving to God, and the priests brought forward the ark. The Ark of the Covenant was placed in the inner sanctuary, its new home and the holiest of all holy places. Inside the ark were the stone tablets given to Moses; the covenant that God made with Israel many, many years before.

After the priests left this holy place, God's presence filled the temple so strongly that it clouded the whole building. God's glory filled the temple, the house of the Lord. Solomon built a house, a place where God could live and dwell, and a place where people could stop and encounter God in all of God's beauty and holiness.

Solomon stood before the altar in the temple and prayed. He offered God worship, praise, and thanksgivings. He asked for God's blessing on the house and that God would always be present to the people who worshipped there. He prayed for the people who would take time to encounter God in this place; he prayed that they would feel God's love, healing, and presence. Then, Solomon blessed those who were present in that place, reminding them of their love and devotion to God. The congregation then had a great festival and celebration, for God had yet another sacred space in which to dwell. After taking the time to build the temple, Solomon, along with the people, now had another place where they could go, seek, and worship God in all of God's wonder and holiness.

Lesson Sheet 8.2

Bricks for Ritual