

Feast of the Tabernacles – Mary and Martha

Memory Verse:

Psalm 46:10 “Be still and know that I am God.”

Before the lesson:

Make

Citrus Mint Punch

5 large sprigs fresh mint
2 cups water, divided
1/3 cup sugar
2 cups orange juice
lemon juice from 3 lemons
Ice

Pull the mint leaves off the stems and discard the stems. Put 1 cup of the water in a saucepan and bring to a boil. Remove from heat and add the mint leaves and the sugar to the pan. Use a wooden spoon to bruise the leaves a bit as you stir. Then let the mixture steep for 15 minutes.

Pour the remaining juices into a pitcher along with the remaining 1 cup of water. Add the mint/sugar mixture and enough ice to fill the pitcher. Stir well.

Lesson:

Begin with this discussion:

The Jews/Israelites celebrated many special holidays. They called them feast days. What kinds of holidays do we celebrate? What do we do during our holidays? How do we feel during our holidays?

One special Jewish holiday was The Feast of the Tabernacles. The Bible commanded them to celebrate it. You can read about it in the Old Testament books of Numbers, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy. Deut 16:14-15 Be joyful at your festival – you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levites, the foreigners, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns. For seven days celebrate the festival to the Lord your God at the place the Lord will choose. For the Lord your God will bless you in all your harvest and in all the work of your hands, and your joy will be complete.

This holiday was similar to our Thanksgiving. It happened at the end of harvest time and lasted for 7 days. Some of the important things that happened during this feast week included the priests making many burnt offerings, everyone getting together to read the scriptures out loud in public, and everyone praying together every day.

This festival came at a very busy time of year. The harvest time was a lot of hard work and people were very tired, but usually very happy when it all came to an end.

One unusual part of this celebration is that every family was supposed to build a temporary shelter outside of their house, usually in their back yard. They would make the walls out of anything they could find – wood, metal, or in modern times cardboard, or plastic. But the roof always had to be made out of palm fronds and tree branches so that you could look up and see the stars. All week long the family would eat their meals outside in their shelter (tabernacle), and often they would sleep there, too. The reason they did this was to remember what it was like when the nation of Israel lived in the desert for 40 years while God took care of them.

(We decorated our classroom with palm fronds and Christmas lights. You can do the same at your house. Or weave a strand of lights through a leafy tree branch and suspend it from the ceiling. Then you can plug in the Christmas lights and pretend they are stars overhead.)

The most important command to follow during the Feast of the Tabernacles was to be joyful! To rejoice together in your feast! The week of the feast became known as “the season of joy” and everyone celebrated all that the Lord had done for them. It was as if we were going to take Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years and roll it into one happy week.

If you were going to make a list of how to get ready for the Feast of the Tabernacles the #1 thing on your list would be “To Get Happy!”

Now let’s open up our Bibles to the New Testament book of Luke. Chapter 10 and verse 38. Let’s start reading about one time when Jesus was visiting his friends. It was time for the Feast of the Tabernacles to begin!

(Have one child read verse 38 only and then you read the comment. Then another child read the next verse and you read the comment, etc.)

Verse 38

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him.

Martha, her sister Mary, and her brother Lazarus were all very good friends of Jesus. Martha and her family had been busy for the last four days building their shelter and getting everything ready for the celebration week. There was probably still a lot to do before it started.

Verse 39

She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said.

Even though there was a lot to do Mary took time to sit with their guest, Jesus, and hear what he had to say.

Verse 40

But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!”

Martha was so busy preparing for the feast that she did not take time to sit with her guest. Doing chores or work was not allowed during the whole week of the Feast of the Tabernacles and Martha was obviously stressed about getting everything done in time. Do you think Martha sounds joyful?

Verse 41

“Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things,

Yes, Jesus agrees with us! Martha did not sound joyful at all! It sounds like she had forgotten the point of the feast which was to rejoice in the Lord and be thankful for all that He has provided! You see, one of the main preparations for the Feast of the Tabernacles was getting happy! Let’s read what Jesus says next:

Verse 42

But few things are needed – or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”

Jesus explained to Martha that Mary was doing the right thing by spending time with Jesus listening and talking and showing hospitality. There will always be chores to do, but Jesus was not always going to be visiting with them. It was important to stop, to be still, and listen to Jesus.

In fact having guests and visiting with friends is something that is supposed to happen during the Feast of the Tabernacles!

At this point you can return to the kitchen and let everyone make a simple sandwich. We used homemade bread, sliced turkey, sliced cheese, mustard and mayonnaise. You can use what you like, just keep it simple and make sure to have a happy attitude!

When everyone has their sandwich and a glass of punch go back and sit down under the tree branches and lights, but don’t eat yet!

We are going to say a special blessing!

http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Blessings/Holiday_Blessings/Sukkot_Blessings/sukkah-blessing-studycard.pdf

Download a printable card from the link above. You can read the Hebrew blessing first, and then read the English translation.

“Blessed are You, LORD our God, King of the universe, Who sanctifies us with his commandments and commanded us to dwell in the sukkah.”

Sukkah is a Hebrew word that also means tabernacle or shelter.

Let the children try repeating as much as they can, or at least the very last part of “Happy Sukkot”

While you are eating go around the room and have everyone take turns naming something that makes them happy or joyful, or something they are thankful for.

When everyone is finished eating have everyone help to clean up so that no one person is stuck with the unhappy job of cleanup by themselves.

If you have time you can talk about the extra facts below:

More facts about Feast of Tabernacles:

This joyous time of year included a trip to the Temple in Jerusalem. There was dancing and parading and people carried switches of palm, willow, & myrtle to wave around and symbolize God’s bounty and blessing. People would pray for rain and for a good harvest next year. It was supposed to be a time of vacation after the hard work of harvest.

Activities should include praying together, visiting friends, inviting guests to your house, eating out doors in the shelters, and reading scriptures together out loud.

Everyone should focus on a time of fellowship with the Lord, to celebrate all that the Lord has done for us.

Deut 16:14-15 Be joyful at your festival – you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levites, the foreigners, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns. For seven days celebrate the festival to the Lord your God at the place the Lord will choose. For the Lord your God will bless you in all your harvest and in all the work of your hands, and your joy will be complete.

To build a shelter (Sukkot, Tabernacle)

Walls can be pretty much anything from just a sheet, to wood, tin or plastic or anything else.

The roof needs to be palm fronds or leafy overgrowth.

Decorate the inside of your shelter by hanging colorful fruits and vegetables, stringing colorful paper chains, hanging flags and banners. One banner can say “God is our Shelter”