



Use Week of:

## Unit 6 • Session 1

# The Golden Calf

### BIBLE PASSAGE:

Exodus 32; 34

**STORY POINT:** God's people  
worshipped a golden calf.

### KEY PASSAGE:

Exodus 15:2a

### BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

What is worship? Worship is celebrating  
the greatness of God.

**INTRODUCE THE STORY**  
(15–20 MINUTES)  
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**TEACH THE STORY**  
(10–15 MINUTES)  
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**EXPERIENCE THE STORY**  
(20–25 MINUTES)  
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## LEADER Bible Study

God led His people into the wilderness, but He did not leave them there alone. The Lord was with His people. He provided meat, bread, and water. He guided them to Mount Sinai, where He met with their leader, Moses. The Lord came down on the mountain in fire, and He spoke through thunder. The Israelites could not have ignored His presence.

But when Moses went up on the mountain and did not return for several weeks, the Israelites felt abandoned. They appealed to Moses' brother, Aaron: "Come, make gods for us who will go before us because this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt—we don't know what has happened to him!" (Ex. 32:1)

Aaron's response led the people to commit a terrible sin. He gathered gold from the people and made an image of a calf, and the people worshiped the golden calf. God saw what the people were doing, and He told Moses to go down the mountain at once. Moses confronted his brother. Aaron claimed that when the people gave him the gold, he threw it into the fire, and "out came this calf!" (Ex. 32:24)

God punished His people for worshiping a golden calf, and Moses returned to the mountain to ask the Lord to forgive the Israelites' sin. Moses could not atone for the people's sin; God said He would hold the people accountable for their sins, but the Lord did not abandon the Israelites.

Introduce the preschoolers you teach to the concept of idolatry. An idol is anything a person puts in the place of God. Explain that idolatry is a sin. The Israelites deserved to be punished for their sin. In the same way, we deserve to be punished for our sin. Point out that Jesus never sinned. He is greater than Moses, and when we sin, Jesus not only talks to the Father for us, He atones for our sin. God forgives those who trust in Jesus.

# The BIBLE Story

## The Golden Calf

*Exodus 32; 34*

Moses and the Israelites were in the wilderness. God had freed them from slavery in Egypt, and He helped them escape the angry pharaoh and his army. **The Israelites set up camp in front of a mountain** called Mount Sinai (SIGH nigh). **Moses went up the mountain, and God talked to him.**

God had a lot to tell Moses, and **Moses was up on the mountain for a long time.** The Israelites at the bottom of the mountain were tired of waiting.

Where is Moses? What is taking him so long? they wondered.

**The people went to talk to Aaron, Moses' brother.** "We need a god to lead us because we do not know what happened to Moses," they said. So Aaron used gold to make a statue of a calf for them to worship.

God saw what the people were doing, and He was angry because of their sin. God told Moses to go down the mountain.

**Moses rushed down the mountain, carrying two stone tablets that God had written on.** He got closer to the camp and saw the people dancing in front of the gold calf. **Moses threw down the stone tablets, smashing them at the bottom of the mountain.**



**Then he destroyed the gold calf.**

“What were you thinking?” Moses asked his brother.

**The next day,** Moses said, “I will go up to the Lord. Maybe I can do something so God will forgive you.” Then **Moses went back up the mountain to talk to God.**

**“Please forgive these people,” Moses said to God.** God said, “When it is time to punish them, I will punish them for their sin.”

God gave Moses more laws and instructions. **God made two more stone tablets** because Moses broke the first two. **God said to Moses, “The Lord cares about His people. He is good to them. But He will punish the guilty.”**

**Moses bowed down and worshiped God.** “Lord, please go with us,” he said. “Forgive our sin, and accept us as Your people.”

*Christ Connection: God’s people disobeyed God, and Moses asked God to forgive them. Moses talked to God for the people. When we sin, Jesus talks to God for us. Jesus never sinned. God forgives those who trust in Jesus.*

## **Bible Storytelling Tips**

### **• Dramatic play:**

Invite an adult leader to dress in Bible times clothing and pantomime Moses’ actions while you tell the story. Add a dramatically long pause when he leaves the room. Use a whiny voice for the Israelites. Consider inviting another leader or child to act as Aaron, and/or inviting the preschoolers to act as the Israelites.

- Art:** Use a gold writing utensil to draw a calf on paper when you come to the part of the story where Aaron makes the calf. Rip up the paper when you come to the part of the story where Moses destroys the calf.

# INTRODUCE the Story



**SESSION TITLE:** The Golden Calf

**BIBLE PASSAGE:** Exodus 32; 34

**STORY POINT:** God's people worshiped a golden calf.

**KEY PASSAGE:** Exodus 15:2a

**BIG PICTURE QUESTION:** What is worship? Worship is celebrating the greatness of God.

## Welcome time

- "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah" song
- offering basket
- Allergy Alert download
- favorite toys related to the Bible story theme
- "What Does Not Belong?" activity page, 1 per child
- markers or crayons

Play a theme song in the background as you greet preschoolers and follow your church's security procedures. Set an offering basket near the door to collect at an appropriate time. Post an allergy alert, if necessary. Set out a few favorite theme-related toys, such as puzzles and blocks.

## Activity page

Guide preschoolers to circle the nine out-of-place items on the activity page. Emphasize how such things distract us from worshiping God.

**SAY** • There are some silly things in that worship service!

Imagine trying to focus on God with a cow in the room. In our Bible story today, people didn't just lose focus on God, they actually started worshiping a cow statue they made! Jesus always stays focused on God, and He helps us worship Him alone.

## LOW PREP

- "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah" song (optional)
- "He Has Become My Salvation" song (optional)

## Play freeze dance

Encourage preschoolers to dance freely while you play music, but to freeze like a statue when the music stops. Tell children they must wait patiently for the music to begin again. Create longer pauses in each round. Consider using a device that will make it difficult for children to know when

you are about to pause or play the music. Dance along with the boys and girls.

**SAY** •Was it hard to wait patiently during our game? Today we will learn about a time when God's people got tired of waiting for Moses. They even started dancing for a silly statue! Jesus always waits patiently to hear from God the Father, and Jesus talks to God the Father for us when we sin.

## Build with gold

Wrap blocks in gold paper. Encourage preschoolers to build with the gold blocks. Suggest children try building a cow with the gold blocks and then knock it down. Remind children to move out of the path of falling blocks.

- blocks
- gold paper
- tape

**SAY** •Do you remember the first two commandments from our Bible story last week? (*Do not have other gods besides Me. Do not make an idol for yourself.*) God's people had heard God speak in thunder and saw His miracles, but they broke these first two commandments by making a golden cow to worship instead of God! Jesus never forgets God's commands. When we trust in Jesus, God puts His law in our hearts so we can remember them and keep them.

## Transition to tell the story

To gain the attention of all the preschoolers to move them to Bible study, show the countdown video, flip off the lights, or clap a simple rhythm for the children to copy. Invite preschoolers to moo like cows as they move to Bible study.

- countdown video (optional)

# TEACH the Story



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## Introduce the Bible story

- Bible
- bookmark
- Giant Timeline

Place a bookmark at Exodus 32 in your Bible. Invite a preschooler to open it. Reverently display the open Bible.

**SAY** • Today's Bible story comes from the second book of the Bible, Exodus. Moses wrote this story so everyone would know God's true Word!

Point to the Bible story picture on the giant timeline. Remind children that all the stories in the Bible fit together to tell an even bigger story. The Bible tells us the big story of how God rescues sinners through His Son, Jesus.

## Tell or watch the Bible story

- Story Point Poster
- "The Golden Calf" video (optional)
- Bible Story Picture Poster

Show the video or tell the Bible story using the provided storytelling tips. Use the bolded version of the Bible story for young preschoolers.

**SAY** • After everything God had done for His people, they disobeyed His commands. The first two commandments say do not have other gods besides Me and do not make an idol for yourself. An idol is anything a person makes as important as God. **God's people worshiped a golden calf.** God was right to be angry with them. Moses asked God to forgive His people. When we sin, Jesus talks to God for us. Jesus never sinned. God forgives those who trust in Jesus.

## Practice the key passage

Cut out the key passage marker and place it at Exodus 15:2. Before the session, wrap the Bible in gold paper. Invite a preschooler to tear off the gold paper and open the Bible to the key passage. Read the key passage aloud. Create motions for preschoolers to use as they say the key passage. Use the key passage song video for inspiration.

- gold paper
- tape
- Key Passage Marker
- Key Passage Poster
- "He Has Become My Salvation" song
- "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah" song

**SAY** • Our key passage comes from a song that Moses wrote when God rescued the Israelites from Pharaoh's army at the Red Sea. God's people should have remembered it so they wouldn't be tempted to make and worship an idol! We worship only God because He rescues us. Sing the key passage song, "He Has Become My Salvation," and the theme song "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah."

## Learn the big picture question and answer

**SAY** • We've talked about worship a lot today, but does anyone know what worship is? That's our big picture question. ***What is worship? Worship is celebrating the greatness of God.*** God's people worshiped a golden calf, but God alone deserves celebrating!

- Big Picture Question Poster



## Missions moment

Display the "Buddhist Temple Worship" printable.

**SAY** • This woman is worshipping in a temple, but she is not worshipping the one true God of the Bible. Japan is a country filled with temples like this. We will hear about a missionary family that is telling the people of Japan about Jesus. Let's pray for the people in Japan and for the woman in this picture.

- "Buddhist Temple Worship" printable

## Pray and transition to experience the story

# EXPERIENCE the Story



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**BIG PICTURE QUESTION:** What is worship? Worship is celebrating the greatness of God.

## LOW PREP

Suggested  
emotions:

- happy
- sad
- angry
- surprised
- excited
- impatient

## Guess the emotion

Explain that you will act out an emotion. Children should guess the emotion. The first child to guess correctly may then act out an emotion for the other children to guess. Be prepared to offer suggestions. Include emotions from the Bible story, such as impatient and angry.

**SAY** • The people in our Bible story felt many different emotions, and they weren't hard to guess! The Israelites were tired of waiting for Moses, so they made a new leader to follow. **God's people worshipped a golden calf.** God was angry at their sin, but Moses asked God to forgive His people. When we sin, Jesus talks to God for us. Jesus never sinned. God forgives those who trust in Jesus.

## Spend wisely

Give preschoolers play money and allow them to "shop" for toys and other classroom items. Younger preschoolers may simply exchange their money for any item. Consider assigning prices to various items for older preschoolers. Help them determine how much they can "buy" with the money they have. Encourage children to think about how to spend their money wisely. Ask each child to explain why he chose to buy the things he did.

- play money
- toys and other classroom items

Tip: To avoid tears, remind children that this is pretend, and both the money and the toys will remain in the classroom.

**SAY** • In our Bible story today, the people gave Aaron their gold to make a statue. They spent what they had on a worthless idol instead of loving God. Later, Jesus explained that we can know what really matters to us by what we spend our money on (Matthew 6:21). Only God is worthy of our love and worship! ***What is worship? Worship is celebrating the greatness of God.*** Let's pray for God's wisdom in how to use what we have in a way that celebrates Him.

## Experiment with breaking things

Set out various breakable and nonbreakable items for children to test breaking. Examples include dried lumps of play dough, old crayons, rocks, twigs, and fake gold jewelry. Be sure to include stone and inexpensive gold items. Place an item between two towels. Allow children to attempt to break an item with a rubber mallet. Closely observe preschoolers' use of the mallet to avoid mashed fingers.

- various breakable and nonbreakable items
- towels
- rubber mallet

**SAY** • When Moses saw that **God's people worshiped a golden calf**, he threw down the stone tablets, smashing them at the bottom of the mountain. Then he destroyed the gold calf. Was it easy to destroy our stone and gold items? Moses must have been really upset to break the stone tablets and gold calf. He was right to be angry about the people's sin. When we are upset about our sin and confess it, God forgives us because Jesus took the punishment for our sin.

## Smash play dough idols

Invite children to recreate their favorite toy out of play dough. Explain that toys are a good gift from God, but if we care about them more than God, the toy has become an

- play dough
- play dough utensils

idol. Define an idol as anything a person makes as important as God. Invite preschoolers to smash their play dough creations. Pray the children would worship only God.

**SAY** • We may think worshiping a golden calf statue is silly, but all of us are tempted to think other things are more important than God. If you spend all of your time playing with your new favorite toy and ignore your chores at home, then you are worshiping your toy and disobeying your parents and God. ***What is worship? Worship is celebrating the greatness of God.*** God, help us all to worship only You and nothing else!



## Make candy sushi

Before the session, prepare crisped rice cereal treats by melting 3 tablespoons of butter in a large saucepan over low heat. Add 10½ ounces of mini marshmallows. Cook until marshmallows are completely melted and mixture is well blended, stirring constantly. Remove from heat. Add 6 cups of cereal and mix well. Press into the bottom of 13-by-9-inch pan lined with waxed paper. Cool completely. Once cereal treats are firm, lift waxed paper. Cut treats into rectangles 3 to 4 inches in length.

Post an allergy alert. Give each preschooler a treat, a fish-shaped chewy candy, and a strip of fruit leather long enough to wrap around each piece of candy sushi. Use the example in the margin to help preschoolers assemble their sushi.

**SAY** • Sushi is a very common dish in Japan. It is traditionally made using rice, raw fish, and seaweed. Before we eat our candy sushi, let's pray for missionaries in Japan to lead people to turn from idols to worship the one true God.

- crisped rice cereal
- butter
- large saucepan
- mini marshmallows
- waxed paper
- knife (adult use)
- fish-shaped chewy candy, 30
- fruit leather strips, 30

Tip: This recipe should yield 30 treats.



## Snack and review

Play the countdown video to signal the end of activities. Wash hands and gather preschoolers for snack time. Pray, thanking God for the snack.

Serve graham crackers and pudding cups for snack if preschoolers did not already eat candy sushi. Invite children to crush their graham crackers as a crumb topping for their pudding. Talk about how Moses broke the stone tablets when he saw that **God's people worshiped a golden calf**. Moses went back up the mountain and asked God to forgive the people. When we sin, Jesus talks to God for us. Jesus never sinned. God forgives those who trust in Jesus.

Show the Bible story picture as you ask the following questions. Retell parts of the Bible story as needed.

1. Where did God talk to Moses? (*on a mountain*)
2. What did God's people worship? (*a golden calf*)
3. How did God feel about what the people were doing? (*angry*)
4. Who asked God to forgive the people? (*Moses*)
5. Who talks to God for us when we sin? (*Jesus*)
6. ***What is worship? Worship is celebrating the greatness of God.***

## Transition

When preschoolers finish their snack, they may color the Bible story coloring page, play a simple game to practice the key passage or big picture question, or sing along to the key passage or theme song.

If parents are picking up their children at this time, tell them something that their child enjoyed doing or did well during the session. Distribute the preschool big picture cards for families.

- countdown video (optional)
- Allergy Alert download
- paper cups and napkins
- snack food
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- Big Picture Question Poster
- graham crackers (optional)
- pudding cups (optional)
- spoons (optional)

- Bible Story Coloring Page
- crayons
- Key Passage Poster
- Big Picture Question Poster
- "He Has Become My Salvation" song
- "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah" song
- Big Picture Cards for Families: Babies, Toddlers, and Preschoolers