



The Israelites Worship a Golden Calf

Exodus 32:1-25

Third- and fourth-graders are becoming more interested in famous singers, movie stars, and brand-name clothing and shoes. They may not realize their obsession with these people or things can be idolatrous. Use this lesson to help kids put things in perspective and recognize how they can worship God.

LESSON	WHAT CHILDREN DO	SUPPLIES	EASY PREP
1 Getting Started	Who's Famous? <i>(about 10 min.)</i> Decide in groups who their favorite famous person is, and then demonstrate how a crowd would react to that person.		
2 Bible Exploration	Who the Israelites Worshipped <i>(about 25 min.)</i> Go through the Bible passage and learn what each person or group did.	Bible, heavy object (such as a backpack full of books), lemon slices, CD player Teacher Pack: CD	

Bold text within the lesson is spoken text.



► Bible Point

Only God deserves our worship.


Key Verse

"You shall have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3).

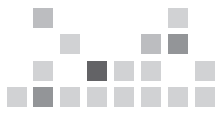
Weaving Faith Into Life

Kids will worship God.



LESSON	WHAT CHILDREN DO	SUPPLIES	EASY PREP
3 Weaving Faith Into Life	Who Will We Worship? <i>(about 15 min.)</i> Learn the Key Verse, and discuss worship.	Bibles, tape Teacher Pack: “Who to Worship” poster 	Cut apart the 4 sections of the “Who to Worship” poster, and tape each piece to a different corner of the room.
	Sweet Worship <i>(about 10 min.)</i> Add sugar to lemons, and discuss how sweet it is to worship God.	Bible Truth Sleuth, pens, lemon slices, paper cups, spoons, sugar	Tear out the Lesson 6 pages from each Bible Truth Sleuth student book.
4 Lasting Impressions	Daily Challenges <i>(about 5 min.)</i> Choose a Daily Challenge to apply God’s Word.	Bible Truth Sleuth	
	Weaving Faith at Home <i>(about 2 min.)</i> Talk about how to share what they learned with their families.		

Bold text within the lesson is spoken text.



The Israelites Worship a Golden Calf

Exodus 32:1-25

BIBLE BACKGROUND
FOR LEADERS

Out of Sight

Moses was up on the mountain for a long time receiving all the laws from God—almost six weeks (Exodus 24:18)! It’s likely that the Israelites feared Moses had perished on the mountain. Since he had been their main contact with God, they may have reasoned that they had lost contact with God, too.

The Hebrews spent more than 400 years seeing “gods” in Egypt, and now they’d been asked to serve and follow a God they couldn’t see. For the majority of the time they’d known God, he’d had personal relationships with individuals among them. They may not have realized God was interested in each of them individually and as an entire community.

They’d been camped in the same place for six weeks and were likely getting anxious to move on. They couldn’t even see God’s representative, so they fell back on what they were familiar with and asked for a god they could see who would continue to lead them.

What Was Aaron Thinking?

Aaron’s willingness to go along suggests that he, too, had some doubt about Moses’ return. However, some believe that Aaron’s request for gold earrings was an attempt to avert the people’s desire for a god. If they realized they had to give up things of value, they might decide they didn’t really want a golden god after all. If that was Aaron’s intent, his attempt failed.

After making the idol, Aaron’s proclamation was that there’d be a “festival to the Lord.” The name translated Lord (Yahweh) is the name by which God had announced himself to Moses at the burning bush. Apparently, Aaron thought that this idol could somehow represent the true God. Regardless of his motives, Aaron was wrong in making the idol. He led the people in disobeying God’s second commandment (Exodus 20:4).

In talking to Moses, Aaron tried to make it seem as if he had no choice and that the fire itself had mysteriously shaped the calf. God’s sparing of Aaron in this situation was certainly an example of his mercy and grace.

The Jesus Connection

We are surrounded by things that promise to bring us immediate pleasure and satisfaction. Many of these promises are deceitful, leading to destruction. But even God’s blessings themselves can distract us from our true calling of worshipping God. Jesus came to offer the only thing that’s truly worth having. Take a moment to write a prayer revealing your heart’s desire to follow God and asking for his help in dislodging some things that might be stealing your worship away from God.





1 GETTING STARTED

Who's Famous?

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Welcome kids warmly as they arrive, and ask them how their week went. Have them form four groups. Say: **Everyone think of a famous person. Then in your groups, decide which of your famous people your group likes the best. Don't let the other groups hear who you've chosen!**

Once you've decided, one person will pretend to be the famous person and you'll act out for the rest of us the way you think people would react if they saw that person come into this room. The rest of us will try to guess your famous person.

Give groups a couple of minutes to each choose a famous person and decide how they'll act out people's reactions to that person. Then have kids present those reactions while everyone else guesses who the person is.

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- **What do your reactions to the famous people you chose say about you or about those people?**
- **Why do you think people react to famous people the way they do?**
- **When people react to famous people in the ways your groups demonstrated, it's sometimes called idolizing or worshipping. Do you think any of the people you thought of today are worthy of worship? Why or why not?**

Say: ► **ONLY GOD DESERVES OUR WORSHIP. But sometimes we can get confused and give our attention to things that don't deserve our worship. We'll learn about who the Israelites worshipped when they got distracted from God.**

2 BIBLE EXPLORATION

Who the Israelites Worshipped

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Say: **Today we'll learn about how the Israelites became impatient while waiting for Moses to return from Mount Sinai. Moses had been gone a long time, and the**

Who the Israelites Worshipped Supplies

Bible
heavy object (such as a
backpack full of books)
lemon slices
CD player
Teacher Pack
CD: "Israelite Party"
(track 11)

! **ALLERGY**
■ **ALERT**





people were tired of waiting. They didn't know what had happened to Moses, so they decided to take matters into their own hands.

Have a willing child read aloud Exodus 32:1-6. Then give kids 30 seconds to demonstrate how they act when they're impatient.

Say: **The Israelites had waited a long time to get out of Egypt. They had been slaves for more than 400 years! And now they had been in the desert only a few months and they were complaining. The Israelites were impatient. They wanted things their way—immediately. Let's look at what God said about how the Israelites were acting.**

Have a willing child read aloud Exodus 32:7-10.

Say: **The Israelites were *stiff-necked*. Let's do something to help us think about what that might mean.** Have kids keep their necks as stiff as they can as they try to follow the commands you give. Say: **Look at your neighbor's feet and tell all of us what color socks he or she is wearing.** Allow 30 seconds. Say: **Now look up at the ceiling and count how many lights there are in the room.** Allow 30 seconds, and remind kids to keep their necks stiff if they forget.

Ask:

- **Was it hard to follow my instructions while your necks were stiff? Why or why not?**

Say: ***Stiff-necked* actually means inflexible or stubborn. God was very angry that the Israelites had disobeyed him and were worshipping an idol, and he knew they would be stubborn and not want to change their ways.**

Moses pleaded with God to spare the lives of the Israelites. Even though they didn't deserve it, God agreed. Then when Moses returned to where the Israelites were, he heard the noise of people shouting. Joshua, who was helping Moses, said he thought it was the sound of war. But that wasn't what it really was. Moses knew that what he was hearing was the Israelites having a wild party.

Play "Israelite Party" (track 11 on the CD), and have kids celebrate and party like the Israelites did.

After a minute, and before the CD segment stops, startle the kids by dropping the heavy object on the floor to make a loud noise. Then have kids sit together.

Ask:

- **What was it like to be startled out of your fun by this object dropping?**

Say: **When Moses saw the Israelites, he was very angry because the Israelites were worshipping an idol. Let's find out what he did next.** Ask a willing child to read aloud Exodus 32:19-20.





Say: **After Moses had pleaded with God to save the Israelites, he was unpleasantly surprised by what he saw them doing. They were *not* worshipping the one and only God, the one who freed them from Egypt. They were worshipping a golden calf and calling it a god! So Moses destroyed their idol and ground it into powder!**

Ask:

- **Think about a time something special to you got ruined. How did you react?**

Say: **Moses didn't stop at just destroying the idol; he put the powder from the destroyed idol into water and made the Israelites drink it!**

Give a lemon slice to each child. After kids have tasted their lemon slices, say: **These lemons tasted really sour, but what the Israelites drank was probably much worse. It probably tasted terrible!**

The Israelites sinned. Moses wanted them to know it. Let's find out what explanation Aaron tried to give for their behavior. Have a willing child read aloud the rest of today's Bible passage, Exodus 32:21-25.

Have kids form pairs and pretend to do what Aaron said he did. Tell the pairs to choose an inanimate object in the room and pretend to light a fire under it. Encourage them to ask the object to get up and move. After about a minute, invite them to come back to a circle.

Say: **There was quite a bit that didn't make sense about what Aaron said. He told Moses that he put the gold into the fire and that the calf came out of it. But we know that nonliving things don't do anything on their own.**

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- **What do you think of the Israelites' behavior in this passage?**
- **What things in your life may have led you to worship something other than God?**
- **What can you do to put God back into first place in your life?**

Say: ► **ONLY GOD DESERVES OUR WORSHIP.** He brought the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt and was leading them to the Promised Land. We may think the Israelites forgot too easily about the things God had done, but the reality is that we can easily forget about God, too. We can find things to distract us or take our time away from him. Let's make sure we do whatever is possible in order to give our worship to God only.





3 WEAVING FAITH INTO LIFE

Who Will We Worship?

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Make sure each child has a Bible. Say: **Our Key Verse today is Exodus 20:3.** Have kids find the verse in their Bibles, and ask a willing child to read the verse aloud: "You shall have no other gods before me." Encourage kids to repeat the verse together a couple of times.

Say: **This verse tells us that ► ONLY GOD DESERVES OUR WORSHIP.**

Have kids form four groups, and then send each group to a different corner of the room. Have kids look at the pictures and discuss why people would think the item or items in their pictures are important. Rotate groups around the room until each group has discussed each picture.

Say: **Many things could easily become more important to people than worshipping God.**

Ask:

- **How is wanting things like a shiny new sports car or a new iPod or even lots of money like worshipping idols?**

Say: **In the Bible today, we learned that it was more important to the Israelites to worship a golden calf than to worship God. Even though God had freed them from being slaves in Egypt and was taking them to the Promised Land, they grew impatient while waiting and decided to worship something else instead.**

Have groups each bring their picture to a table.

Say: **The pictures you discussed during this activity show just some of the things that people could worship instead of God. Let's see what the Bible says about worshipping things rather than God.** Have kids flip the pictures over and put the four pieces of the verse in order. Have them sit down.

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- **Is there anything you think is more important than God? Explain.**
- **How can you know if you're putting something before God in your life?**
- **What difference does it make whether God's in first place in your life or not?**
- **What changes would you like to make to your priorities?**



Who Will We Worship? Supplies

Bibles
tape

Teacher Pack
"Who to Worship"
poster

Who Will We Worship? Easy Prep

Cut apart the 4 sections of the "Who to Worship" poster, and tape each piece to a different corner of the room.





Sweet Worship Supplies

Bible Truth Sleuth pens
lemon slices
paper cups
spoons
sugar

! ALLERGY ALERT

Sweet Worship Easy Prep

Tear out the Lesson 6 pages from each Bible Truth Sleuth student book.

Say: **We can pray and ask God to help us see the areas in our lives in which we're not placing him in first place. When we do that, it helps our hearts be more healthy because ► ONLY GOD DESERVES OUR WORSHIP.** The Israelites got distracted and worshipped things they made rather than the God who made them. They learned the hard way that ► **ONLY GOD DESERVES OUR WORSHIP.**

Sweet Worship

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Have kids form pairs and sit down somewhere in the room with their partners.

Pray: **Dear Lord, there are many things in our lives that can seem to be more important to us than you are. Please help us always put you first and worship you only. Thank you for sending your Son, Jesus, to free us from our sins.** Distribute pens and this week's Bible Truth Sleuth pages. Invite kids to take about five minutes to write prayers on the "I Will Worship God" section. The pages contain instructions. Kids will write about things they worship instead of God. Use this time to distribute the lemon slices, each one in a paper cup.

After about four of the five minutes, ask kids to stop writing and pray. Encourage them to listen to God more than they talk.

When kids finish, say: **In Jesus' name, amen.**

Set out sugar and spoons. Say: **You tasted lemons earlier. When we worship God and believe in his Son, Jesus, it's sweet to him.** Have kids put plenty of sugar all over the lemon slices and bite into them again.

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- **What changed about the taste of the lemons?**
- **How is that the same as how worshipping God can change our lives?**
- **What's different about how we're affected when we worship God compared with how it affects us to worship other things?**
- **What can you do in your daily activities to worship only God?**

Say: **No matter what kinds of things are going on in our lives, worshipping God can change our attitudes and help us even in hard times. That's why ► ONLY GOD DESERVES OUR WORSHIP.** When we worship things instead of God, we're missing the best part. The Israelites missed the best thing they could've worshipped when they gave their worship to the golden calf instead of worshipping God.





4 LASTING IMPRESSIONS

Daily Challenges

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Say: Consider how you can remember this week that ► **ONLY GOD DESERVES OUR WORSHIP.**

Have kids find this week's Daily Challenges on their Bible Truth Sleuth pages and choose one to do this week. They can choose one or more of these three options:

- Find one thing in your life that takes up more space than you want it to. Ask God to help you replace that thing with him.
- Ask your parents to help you choose a good love song or poem. Read the lyrics of the song or poem and compare them with the way you can worship God in your life. Write a love song or poem to God.
- Make a list ranking the importance of things in your life. Evaluate your priorities and pray about them. Ask God to help your priorities line up with worshipping only him, not just worshipping him more than other things.

Make sure you choose a Daily Challenge as well, and tell the kids what you chose. Kids will be more inclined to follow through on their commitments when they see you doing the same.

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- What's a practical way you're going to do your Daily Challenge? Include a time, a place, and other ideas.

Say: The Israelites forgot to keep God first in their lives. We can remember that ► **ONLY GOD DESERVES OUR WORSHIP** as we follow through on our Daily Challenges.

Weaving Faith at Home

Encourage kids to talk with their parents about the Daily Challenges they chose and what they learned about worshipping God. Kids can also do the activities in the "HomeConnect" section of their Bible Truth Sleuth pages with their families.

Talk to your Director about emailing the FREE FamilyConnect to all your church's families. Available at group.com/digital.

Have kids form pairs and pray together, asking God to help them worship only him throughout the week.



Daily Challenges Supplies

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Bible Truth Sleuth



