



The Israelites Worship a Golden Calf

Exodus 32:1-25

Fifth- and sixth-graders unknowingly look for someone to worship. Those aren't the words they'd use to describe what they're looking for. But they're increasingly concerned about popularity and are looking for someone to follow. Use this lesson to help kids see that God is the only one worthy of their worship.



► Bible Point


Only God deserves our worship.

Key Verse

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:2-3).


Weaving Faith Into Life

Kids will focus on God.

LESSON	WHAT KIDS DO	SUPPLIES	EASY PREP
1 Getting Started	Hall of Presidents <i>(about 15 min.)</i> Create and present campaign speeches.	index cards, pens Teacher Pack: "Future President" cards	
2 Bible Exploration	Jealous Worship <i>(about 20 min.)</i> Have a competition as they discover qualities of a good leader.	Bibles, Bible Buzz, pens, paper	Tear out the Lesson 6 pages from each Bible Buzz student book.
	Who We Worship <i>(about 15 min.)</i> Discover who God is by studying his attributes.	Bibles, Bible Buzz, pens	

Bold text within the lesson is spoken text.





LESSON	WHAT KIDS DO	SUPPLIES	EASY PREP
3 Weaving Faith Into Life	Why We Worship <i>(about 10 min.)</i> Give God things that stand in the way of worshipping him.	Bible, Bible Buzz, CD player, pens, 3 index cards per preteen Teacher Pack: CD	
4 Lasting Impressions	Daily Challenges <i>(about 5 min.)</i> Choose a Daily Challenge to apply God's Word.	Bible Buzz	
	Weaving Faith at Home <i>(about 2 min.)</i> Talk about how to share what they learned with their families.	index cards from the "Why We Worship" activity	

Bold text within the lesson is spoken text.





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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.





Hall of Presidents Supplies

index cards

pens

Teacher Pack

“Future President”
cards

1 GETTING STARTED

Hall of Presidents

What You’ll Do ■■■■■■

Welcome kids warmly as they arrive, and ask them how their week went. Have kids form four groups.

Say: **It’s election time. Each group has been assigned to work on a campaign for one of the potential future presidents. I’m going to give you a card that describes the candidate, and you have to come up with a speech that persuades us to vote for your candidate. You can be as creative as you want.**

Distribute one of the “Future President” cards to each group. Allow groups time to create their slogans for a short commercial about their candidates. When groups are ready, have them present their commercials. When commercials are over, have kids gather in the center of the room. Distribute an index card and pen to each preteen. Say: **Write the name of your favorite candidate—but you can’t vote for your own candidate.** When they’ve finished, tally the votes and announce the winning president.

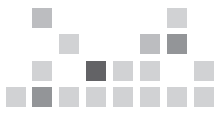
Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- **In this activity, how did you decide which kind of person would get your vote?**
- **Is it okay to look up to people? Explain.**
- **When might looking up to someone be taken too far?**
- **What’s the difference between looking up to someone and worshipping someone?**

Say: **Voting for presidential candidates is important. Even when someone is in a position of great respect, we can be careful to keep God at the front of our lives. Today we’re going to talk about what it means to worship. We’ll explore why**
 ► **ONLY GOD DESERVES OUR WORSHIP.** There are lots of things, people, and ideas that try to get the best of our time or respect, but we can make sure God is at the front of our lives. We’re going to learn about a time the Israelites really messed up and put something else in God’s place. Let’s find out more.



2 BIBLE
EXPLORATION

Jealous Worship

What You'll Do

Have kids get into groups of four. Distribute Bibles, pens, and this week's Bible Buzz pages.

Say: **Have you ever thought about what might happen if we chose not to worship God and to worship instead a god that we created? Let's look at a situation the Israelites got into when they worshipped another god—one they created.**

Ask groups to read Exodus 32:1-25, and assign one of the following two roles to each group: a person who does what Aaron says to do or a person who refuses to do what Aaron says. Have groups write a few sentences supporting their position in the "Aaron or Moses?" section of their Bible Buzz pages. As kids read, have them stop after every five verses to record a few of their thoughts in their Bible Buzz pages.

When groups have finished, have the Aaron supporters go to one side of the room, and have the Moses supporters go to the other side. Have groups present their opinions about why their leader is best. Each time one group gives a good reason, one person from each side of the room will hop across the room and back. The first person to make it back to their original team will win, and his or her team will gain the person from the other team. A new person must participate in the race each time.

Continue as time allows or until kids give all of their answers. Then declare the team with the most kids to be the winning team. The winning team gets to have the losing team do one really silly task. Allow time for kids to choose what the losing team has to do, and then have the losing team do that thing.

Talk With Kids

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- **In what ways was your loyalty to your team affected by being moved from one team to another?**
- **How can team loyalty be like or unlike worship?**
- **Explain what choices you think people make in deciding to worship someone or something today.**
- **Explain whether you think there are different things competing for your admiration and worship.**
- **How do you decide which things and people to admire or follow?**

Say: **The things the Israelites chose to worship may not seem very tempting to us, but then again, the things we give our worship to also might've seemed**



Jealous Worship Supplies

Bibles
Bible Buzz
pens
paper

Jealous Worship Easy Prep

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





Who We Worship Supplies

Bibles
Bible Buzz
pens

strangely unworthy to the Israelites. When we're surrounded by other people who are following certain things, sometimes those things or people can appear more desirable. Whatever the reasons are that we get distracted from worshipping God, we can be sure that ► **ONLY GOD DESERVES OUR WORSHIP**. God deserved the Israelites' worship, and he's still the only one worthy of our worship today.

Who We Worship

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Have kids return to their groups of four, and make sure each person has his or her Bible Buzz page, a pen, and a Bible.

Say: **Find a partner in your group. Spend a minute sharing something you really like about yourself with your partner.**

Have kids find the "Who Is God?" section on their Bible Buzz pages.

Say: **We can get to know God just as we get to know one another. God has a lot of dimensions, and if we're going to worship God, we need to study aspects of him. Let's do that now.**

Encourage groups to choose at least one attribute from the "Who Is God?" section. Say: **Look up the verses listed for the attribute you chose. As a group, decide on a way you'd like to worship God for this attribute. Worship God together based on the attribute your group examined.**

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- In what ways did this experience deepen your understanding of God?
- In what ways is getting to know God similar to or different from getting to know another person?
- How do these attributes help us understand God?
- Which of God's attributes help you know to worship him?

Say: **Getting to know God is a little different from how we get to know people because we're never on even footing with God. He's always God, and we're always human. But knowing God can have greater meaning to our lives than knowing any person. God is always able to take care of us, he always cares, and he's always there. No person can do that for us. The Israelites were afraid for a lot of reasons, and they allowed that fear to cloud their judgment. That led to them worshipping something pretty silly. We've looked at why ► **ONLY GOD DESERVES OUR WORSHIP**, so let's worship God now.**





3 WEAVING FAITH
INTO LIFE

Why We Worship

What You'll Do

Read aloud the Key Verse from Exodus 20:2-3: **“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.”**

Say: **The Israelites chose to worship a false god. We may not worship false gods in the same way, but we do let things in our lives get in the way of worshipping God.**

Have kids sit alone and think of some things in their lives that get in the way of their devotion to God. Say: **These cards will be seen by others, so keep that in mind.** Give each preteen three index cards and a pen. Ask kids to write down one thing on each card.

Choose a few kids to collect all of the index cards when kids are done. Say: **We're going to do a responsive reading. I'm going to say some things and then you'll respond with one phrase of a way you can remind yourself that ► ONLY GOD DESERVES OUR WORSHIP.** As you attempt to do the responsive reading, have the kids who have the index cards read very loudly from the cards.

Say: **Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.** (Pause after reading each line.)

Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.

Know that the Lord is God.

**It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.**

**Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise;
give thanks to him and praise his name.**

**For the Lord is good and his love endures forever;
his faithfulness continues through all generations.**

Have kids find and collect their own index cards from before. Say: **That didn't go very well. Let's spend the next few minutes worshipping God and letting him have the things in our lives that distract us from worshipping him with our lives. Think of one phrase you can use to remind yourself that ► ONLY GOD DESERVES OUR WORSHIP. Write your phrase across the back of each index card.**

Play “Reflective Music” (track 12 on the CD). When the track ends, read the responsive reading below, having kids respond to each line with the phrases they wrote on the back of their cards. Kids can respond out loud or silently. Encourage kids to think about the obstacles they wrote on their index cards as they do this activity. Then read each sentence, and allow time for kids to respond.

Say: **Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.** (Pause after reading each line.)

Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.



Why We Worship Supplies

- Bible
- Bible Buzz
- CD player
- pens
- 3 index cards per preteen
- Teacher Pack**
- CD: “Reflective Music” (track 12)





Know that the Lord is God.

It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise;
give thanks to him and praise his name.

For the Lord is good and his love endures forever;
his faithfulness continues through all generations.

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- In what ways did this activity remind you of how things can get in your way when you try to worship God?
- In what ways can you help yourself find areas of your life in which you're not worshipping God?
- What changes can you make so that you're worshipping only God with your life?

Say: God desires our worship, and ► **ONLY GOD DESERVES OUR WORSHIP.** The Israelites allowed themselves to become distracted, and they worshipped something they'd made with their own hands. Praising and thanking God are important parts of showing our worship. He also cares about our needs and problems. Let's continue our worship of God throughout the week with this focus.

4 LASTING IMPRESSIONS

Daily Challenges

What You'll Do ■■■■

Say: Let's think this week about how we can remember that ► **ONLY GOD DESERVES OUR WORSHIP.**

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

- Use the phrase you wrote on your index cards to help yourself remember to change your focus and worship only God this week. You can write the phrase in places you'll see it and perhaps even think of a tune for the phrase so you can sing it to yourself.
- Write a poem to God, telling him how special he is to you.
- Take time at the beginning of a day this week to focus only on God. The amount of time is up to you. Start with 30 seconds if you need to, and then increase the length of time in later meeting times with God that day.

Daily Challenges
Supplies

Bible Buzz



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, place, and other ideas.**

Say: **The Israelites struggled to know who to worship, and they let themselves follow the crowd. It got them in a lot of trouble. Let’s remember that ► ONLY GOD DESERVES OUR WORSHIP by following through with our Daily Challenges this week.**

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 Buzz 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 bring their index cards and get in pairs.

Say: **Use these cards to focus yourself in this prayer time. You don’t need to share what you wrote on your cards with your partner if you don’t want to. God knows those things already. Just ask God to help your partner focus on worshipping him.**

Close by allowing kids to pray for their partners.



Weaving Faith at Home Supplies

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index cards from the
“Why We Worship”
activity



