

LESSON 7

THE GOLDEN CALF

BEFORE YOU TEACH

Idolatry and the Golden Calf

In biblical times, idols were shaped in human and animal forms. A stone or tree trunk might have served as an idol. At times, idols were treated as if they were gods (Isa 44:17-20). However, most idols probably represented a god or goddess, with the image serving as a link between the physical and spiritual worlds. As male Canaanite gods were often portrayed riding on a bull, many believe the golden calf was intended to serve as a throne for an invisible deity (1 Kgs 12:25-33).

The bull was the principal god of Egypt, and later it became the god of the ten tribes. Not long after receiving the commandment, "You shall have no other gods before Me," the Israelites fashioned a calf out of gold jewelry. This indicates the depths to which the Israelites had sunk in Egyptian idolatry. The Lord was too great to be represented by any carving or statue.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR STUDENTS

Your students may still be under the impression that idols are tangible, man-made images of gods. Through this lesson, you can help your students understand that idols are more often intangible desires and wants that take the place of God in our hearts. As we begin to value other things above God in our hearts, our actions follow. For example, one of your students may have just received a favorite toy. Because it is the Sabbath, they won't get to play with it until they get back home. Perhaps your student insists on bringing it with them, or throws a tantrum, or even suggests that they stay home. Although no one (besides God) can tell what is most important in our hearts, our actions often reveal it. Jesus has said, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Mt 6:21). Our "treasure" consists of our time, money, and effort. What we do with our treasure reveals our heart, or what we value most.

Through this lesson, help your students understand that idols can be many things. Above all, idols are anything that take first place in our hearts. Ask your students to look deep down inside and see if there is anything in their hearts that takes the place of God. If they find anything, they should first pray to God and ask for forgiveness. Although God is a jealous God, He is also a merciful one. Then they can ask God to help them put Him first, because only He can. As we become more and more faithful to God and give Him His rightful place in our lives, He will bless us and meet our needs, and through our lives, God will be glorified.

BIBLE TEXT

Exodus 24:12-18; 32:1-20, 30-34;
34:1-4, 27-28

BIBLE TRUTH

The Lord is the one and only God. He is a jealous God who wants us to worship Him only.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. To never place anything above God in our hearts.
2. To flee from idols and stand up for what we believe in.

MEMORY VERSE

"You shall have no other gods before Me."

(Exodus 20:3)

PRAYER

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we pray. Lord, we thank You for all of Your love and mercy. You love us so much that You came down to this earth to die for us. You have shown us that You love us more than anything—even more than Your own life. Please help us to love You above everything else and help us live for You. Hallelujah! Amen.

VOCABULARY

- idol:** a made-up god
calf: a young cow or bull
destroy: to break to pieces; make useless; ruin; to do away with

REVIEW

Last week, we learned about how Moses went up to Mount Sinai and received the Ten Commandments from God. Let's name the Ten Commandments. [Lead the students into reciting the Ten Commandments by saying, "One, you shall not..."] Good job, boys and girls! The Ten Commandments teach us how to have a relationship with God and with others. The first four focus on our relationship with God, while the last six focus on our relationship with others. Why is it important for us to follow God's commandments? [Give students time to answer.] When we follow God's commands, we are showing Him that we love Him and want to draw near to Him. As God's children, we should live by His every word, and that includes the Ten Commandments.

BIBLE STORY

Warm-up: Can people make gods?

1. Ask your students, "If you make something, will it live? Will it be more powerful than you?"
2. Bring in a handmade object that you or someone else made. Show the object to the students and tell them how it was made and who made it.
3. Discuss how silly it is for us to worship something we made with our own hands.
4. Read Psalm 115:1-8. God is our Creator and is the only One worthy of our worship.

Moses on Mount Sinai

The Israelites were at Mount Sinai when the Lord said to Moses, "Come up on the mountain and stay here for a while. I will give you two flat stones on which I have written the laws and commands that the people must obey." Moses and his helper Joshua got ready, and Moses started up the mountain where God was.

Moses had told the leaders, "Wait here until we come back. Aaron and Hur will be with you, and they can settle any problems while we are away."

When Moses went up to Mount Sinai, a cloud covered it and the bright glory of the Lord came down and stayed there. The cloud covered the mountain for six days, and on the seventh day the Lord told Moses to come into the cloud. Moses went into the cloud on top of the mountain and stayed there for forty days and nights. To the people at the foothills, the Lord's glory looked like a blazing fire on top of the mountain.

The Golden Calf

Boys and girls, what do you think the Israelites were doing during the time Moses went up the mountain? Were they

waiting patiently for Moses to come back with the word of the Lord? Let's find out.

After the people saw that Moses had been on the mountain for a long time, they became anxious and went to Aaron and said, "Make us an image of a god who will lead and protect us! Moses brought us out of Egypt, but nobody knows what has happened to him."

Afraid of the Israelites' frustration and not wanting to displease them, Aaron told them, "Bring me the golden earrings that your wives and sons and daughters are wearing." Everybody took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron, who melted them and made an idol—a golden calf.

All the people said to one another, "This is the god that brought us out of Egypt!"

When Aaron saw what was happening, he built an altar in front of the idol and said, "Tomorrow we will have a big feast to honor the Lord." The people got up early the next morning and killed some animals to be used as sacrifices and others to be eaten. Then everyone ate and drank so much that they began to act like wild people.

Boys and girls, do you think that God would be happy with what Aaron and the Israelites were doing? Did God know what they were doing while Moses and God were talking on the mountain? Of course! Let's see what God said to Moses.

Moses Pleads for the Israelites

The Lord said to Moses, "Hurry back down! Those people you led out of Egypt are acting like fools! They have already stopped obeying Me and have made for themselves an idol that looks like a young bull. They have bowed down to it, offered sacrifices, and said that it is the

god who brought them out of Egypt. Moses, I have seen how stubborn these people are, and I am angry enough to destroy them. Don't try to stop Me! But I will make your descendants into a great nation."

Moses tried to get God to change His mind. He said, "Lord, You used Your great power and might to bring these people out of Egypt. Now don't become angry and destroy them. If You do, the Egyptians will say You brought Your people out here into the mountains just to get rid of them. Please don't be angry with Your people! Don't destroy them!

"Remember the firm promise You made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. You said that someday they would have as many descendants as there are stars in the sky. And You promised to give this land to them." So even though the Lord said He would destroy the people, He changed His mind and let them live.

Boys and girls, why do you think God was so angry? What does this tell us about worshipping idols? God is a jealous God. This means that He wants us to only worship Him because He loves us. Let's find out what happened next.

Broken Stones

Moses went back down the mountain with the two flat stones on which God Himself had written the Ten Commandments. When Joshua heard the noisy shouts of the people, he said to Moses, "A battle must be going on down in the camp!"

But Moses replied, "It doesn't sound to me like they are shouting because they have won or lost a battle. They are singing!"

As Moses got closer to the camp, he saw the golden calf and he also saw the people dancing around. This made him so angry that he threw the stones down and broke them to pieces at the foot of the mountain. He melted the idol the people had made and ground it into powder. He

put it in their water and made them drink it.

The next day Moses told the people, "This is a terrible thing you have done! But I will go back to the Lord to see what I can do to keep this sin from being held against you."

Boys and girls, have you seen a friend do something that you know is wrong? How would you react? We can learn from Moses, who cared about the people even though he was angry that they did a bad thing against God. In the same way, when we see a friend do wrong, we can talk to them about it and pray for them.

Let's see how Moses talked to God about the Israelites.

Moses Pleads for the Israelites Again

Moses returned to the Lord and said, "The people have committed a terrible sin. They have made golden idols to be their gods. But please forgive them. If You don't, please wipe my name out of Your book!" (The people of Israel believed that the Lord kept a record of the names of His people, and anyone whose name was removed from the Lord's book no longer belonged to the Lord.)

The Lord replied, "I will wipe out of My book the name of everyone who has sinned against Me! Now take My people to the place I told you about, and My angel will lead you. But when the time comes, I will punish them for this sin."

New Flat Stones for the Ten Commandments

The Lord then said to Moses, "Take two flat stones like the first ones, and I will write what I had written on the first ones. Come up to Mount Sinai in the morning, and do not bring anyone with you."

So Moses took two flat stones like the first ones and went up to Mount Sinai early in the morning. And the Lord wrote the Ten Commandments on the two flat stones.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

1. How many days and nights was Moses on the mountain? Forty.
2. Aaron made a golden idol that looked like what kind of animal? Calf.
3. True or False: The Lord was so angry that He wanted to destroy the Israelites. True.
4. True or False: Moses agreed that the Lord should destroy the Israelites. False; Moses interceded for them.
5. What did Moses do with the golden calf? He melted it and ground it into powder.
6. Which commandments did the Israelites break? The first and second commandments.

MEMORY VERSE PRACTICE

Please reinforce the memory verse every week.
You can practice the memory verse with your students anytime during class.

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

SPIRITUAL TEACHING & LIFE APPLICATION

1. Keep the (first and second) commandments of God. The Lord is the one and only God, and He is a jealous God. He wants us to worship Him only.

Ask the students to find the Ten Commandments in the Bible. [Give them a hint such as, "It's in the book of Exodus."] Ask the first two students who find them to come to the board to write the first and second commandments. Have the students return to their seats.

In the Bible, we learn many stories of how some people make mistakes and sin against God, but the most serious sin is worshipping idols. Let's find out why God does not want us to worship idols.

"Boys and girls, why do you think that God commanded us to worship Him only? Let's think about all of the things that God has done for us." [Write down what the students say.]

"Boys and girls, is there anyone or anything that can compare to what God has done for us?" (No.)

"Can you think of why God does all these things for us?" (Because He loves us and we are precious to Him.) "How do you think God feels when, after doing all these things for us and loving us, instead of worshiping Him we worship idols?" (Very sad, jealous, angry, etc.)



2. Stand up for what you believe in.

This life application is especially applicable for students who are exposed to idols. Have the students turn to 1 Corinthians 10:14. Call on a volunteer to read it. This verse tells us that we should flee from idolatry. That means we should not be afraid to stand up for what we believe in and abstain from idols.

1. Ask the students if any of them have relatives who are unbelievers that worship idols. Ask them what they would do if their relatives offer them anything that has to do with idols (this is to get an idea of whether the students and their believing parents understand the severity of idols).
2. What are some things you can do if your relatives give you something that has to do with idols? List suggestions on the board.



3. Never place anything more important than God in our hearts.

Sing the hymn "I'll Put Jesus First in My Life." Then read the following story and discuss the questions.

Sophie just received the coolest birthday present ever—a brand new handheld video game system. Her parents got it for her because she had been doing very well in school and did her homework every night so that she had some free time after dinner. She had asked her parents if it was okay to play video games after she finished her homework, but they didn't have any video games at home except on her dad's laptop, which he needed for work. So Sophie's parents surprised her with this awesome gift during her birthday party on Sunday. She played it every night after finishing all her homework, and she had been beating all the hard levels. On Saturday, Sophie was preparing to go to church with her family, and while she was packing her Bible and RE homework she saw her shiny handheld and was about to pack it up to bring it to church.

Boys and girls, do you think that Sophie should have brought her video game system to church? Why?

"Let's go!" called Sophie's mom. "We need to get to church in time for morning prayer session!"

"Coming!" said Sophie. Sophie was busy stuffing her video game system in her bag and didn't notice her dad at her bedroom door. "What's that you just put in your bag?" asked Sophie's dad.

"Oh, nothing," replied Sophie. "Well, not nothing, Daddy. It's only the coolest video game system you and Mom bought me for my birthday."

"It's a pretty great player, isn't it?" said her dad, "But why do you need it for Sabbath service?"

"Um..." said Sophie tentatively, "well, I thought I could show it to my friends."

Boys and girls, what do you think Sophie's dad said to her next? Let's find out.

"Honey, we're going to church to worship God. It's the blessed and holy Sabbath day. That means we're going to focus on God all day today. I don't think you can focus on God when you're playing your video game. What do you say we keep your video game system at home today?"

Sophie sighed. Then she thought, "Daddy's right. God won't be happy if I'm playing or showing off when I'm supposed to be worshipping Him," and she began to take it out of her bag. "I guess I can always play it tomorrow. Besides, it might get lost or broken if I bring it."

"Sweetie, I knew you would make the right decision," said her dad, smiling proudly, "All right! Let's not keep your mom waiting."

Favorite Things

It's not wrong to have favorite things, but when these things start to become more important to us than God, we have to rethink our priorities.

Instructions

1. Ask the students to name some of their favorite things (people, toys, places to go, etc.). List them on the board.
2. Discuss how these things could start to take God's place in their hearts.
3. Discuss healthy ways to enjoy these things without letting them become our spiritual idols.
4. How can we show God that He is the most important to us?

ACTIVITIES

1

A Love Song to God

Objective: To understand that God is our only God.

Materials

- Large poster, around 36" x 48"
- Scissors
- Blank pieces of paper
- Markers, colored pencils, crayons
- Tape or glue

Instructions

1. Brainstorm with the class some reasons why God is the only God. Then have each student name one of their favorite things. Take everything the class has brainstormed and write it into a song.

An example of the structure of this song is:

"God is the best, the strongest, the mightiest! God loves us very much and cares about us... He is more precious to me than [list of students' favorite things]..."

[Suggestion: You can use the children's song "My God Is So Great," or the hymn "I'd Rather have Jesus."]

2. Write out the full song with a bold marker on the large poster.
3. While you write out the song on the poster, allow each student some time to draw and cut out one picture of why they love God and one picture of their favorite thing (altogether two pictures per student).
4. Have each student paste (with tape or glue) their cutouts on the poster.
5. Sing the song together as a class to remind the students that God is our only God.

2

My Beloved, Flee from Idolatry!

Objective: To emphasize to students the importance of fleeing from idolatry.

Preparations

Photocopy the flash cards and cut them out.

Instructions

1. Distribute one card to each student at random (if you have many students, put them in pairs or teams; if you have few students, give each student more than one).
2. Allow the students to read their own card silently while you write out each of the testimony endings on the board.
3. After you have finished writing, pick a student at random to read their testimony aloud.
4. Then let the students decide which ending matches up with the testimony that was just read.
5. Discuss each testimony with the students.

Below are all of the testimonies, endings, and discussion suggestions.

Testimonies

1. **Story:** A sister received a jade necklace on a red string from an aunt in Taiwan. She thought it looked pretty so she wore it once to church. There were a couple of elderly women at church who told her that the jade necklace had to do with idols.
Ending: The sister was shocked, but she obeyed by taking it off right away and throwing it out.
Discussion: Ask the students what they would do if someone older in church told them that something their relative gave them was from idols. Ask them what they would do if they were in a similar situation.
2. **Story:** A brother received a gold cross necklace with a figure of Christ on it from his grandma. The grandma was a church member but did not realize that it was wrong to have an idol of Christ.
Ending: His sister saw it and told their parents that it was a Catholic idol, so they exchanged it at the jewelry store for another necklace without the figure.
Discussion: Explain to the students that even though some things seem Christian, we believe in a God who is almighty and cannot be contained in an image or figure. For example, we do not pray to the cross or the Bible; we pray to God in heaven. The Lord Jesus saved us through the cross, and we read His word in the Bible, but we do not worship these objects.
3. **Story:** A sister received an idol from her mother-in-law who worships idols. She did not want to keep it in her house, but she was afraid to throw it out herself.
Ending: This sister called a preacher to ask him to throw away the idol in the name of the Lord Jesus.
Discussion: Explain that we should obey God above all, but we need to be respectful of our elderly relatives as well. Explain that keeping an idol in our house could cause Satan to attack us.
4. **Story:** There were some sisters who had parents who worshiped idols. Their parents were against them going to church, and one day they forced them to eat food sacrificed to idols.
Ending: The sisters immediately prayed and asked God for forgiveness because they were forced by their parents, and God forgave them.
Discussion: Ask the students what they would do if they were offered, accidentally given, or forced to take food offered to idols.
5. **Story:** A brother and a sister attended a funeral for their Buddhist family friend. At the end of the funeral, the people would go up to the deceased's portrait and bow, and some candy was given out.
Ending: Their mom told them not to bow when they went up and not to take the candy.
Discussion: Explain that sometimes, to show love to our relatives and friends, we may need to attend something like a funeral that is run by idol worshippers. We should refrain from doing any of the religious activities.

6. Story: A sister went to Japan and went sight-seeing. She went with her idol-worshipping friend to see various old buildings, some of which were temples. They also took some pictures.
Ending: The sister told her friend that she did not want to offer incense or have anything to do with the idols. The sister also threw away the pictures that had idols in them.
Discussion: Ask the students what they would do if they were in this situation.
7. Story: A sister went on a school field trip to an old historical building where one of the oldest idols in the city was preserved. All of the kids in her class started to bow down to the idol, but it was just for fun.
Ending: The sister didn't join in on the fun. Instead, she stood by the teachers and chaperones and waited for them to go on to the next part of the field trip.
Discussion: Explain to the students that we should refrain from idols even if it's for fun. In fact, it's not funny. It's God's commandment for us to flee from idols.
8. Story: A sister who just got baptized had grandparents who worshiped idols. Before baptism, she used to worship idols whenever she went to visit her grandparents, but after coming to Christ and baptism, she did not want to worship idols anymore.
Ending: This sister asked her mom to explain to her grandparents why she could not worship idols, and in the end they agreed that she didn't need to worship.
Discussion: Explain to the students that they can always talk to their believing parents to figure out how to deal with relatives who worship idols.

HOMEWORK ANSWER KEY

1. "You shall have no other gods before Me." (Exodus 20:3)
2. Mount Sinai
3. gold, calf
4. True
5. False; Moses interceded for the Israelites.
6. True
7. C
8. D
9. Refer to Psalm 135:15-18 and Jeremiah 10:1-13. Answers may vary.
10. Answers may vary.

My Beloved, Flee from Idolatry!

| | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| <p>A sister received a jade necklace on a red string from an aunt in Taiwan. She thought it looked pretty so she wore it once to church. There were a couple of elderly women at church who told her that the jade necklace had to do with idols.</p> | <p>A brother received a gold cross necklace with a figure of Christ on it from his grandma. The grandma was a church member but did not realize that it was wrong to have an idol of Christ.</p> | <p>A sister received an idol from her mother-in-law who worships idols. She did not want to keep it in her house, but she was afraid to throw it out herself.</p> | <p>There were some sisters who had parents who worshiped idols. Their parents were against them going to church, and one day they forced them to eat food sacrificed to idols.</p> |
| <p>A brother and a sister attended a funeral for their Buddhist family friend. At the end of the funeral, the people would go up to the deceased's portrait and bow, and some candy was given out.</p> | <p>A sister went to Japan and went sight-seeing. She went with her idol-worshipping friend to see various old buildings, some of which were temples. They also took some pictures.</p> | <p>A sister went on a school field trip to an old historical building where one of the oldest idols in the city was preserved. All of the kids in her class started to bow down to the idol, but it was just for fun.</p> | <p>A sister who just got baptized had grandparents who worshiped idols. Before baptism, she used to worship idols whenever she went to visit her grandparents, but after coming to Christ and baptism, she did not want to worship idols anymore.</p> |

E1 Year 1 Book 3 Lesson 7—The Golden Calf

Homework Assignment

Name: _____ Parent signature: _____ Date: _____

Bible Truth: The Lord is the one and only God. He is a jealous God who wants us to worship Him only.

Lesson Objectives: 1. To never place anything above God in our hearts.
2. To flee from idols and stand up for what we believe in.

Bible Reading: Please put a checkmark in the space when you complete the reading each day.

Prayer: Please put a checkmark in the space on the days you prayed to God.

| | Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|---------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Bible Reading | | | | | | | |
| Prayer | | | | | | | |

Memory Verse

Please write down this week's memory verse.

(Exodus 20:3)

What I Learned from the Bible This Week

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Homework Assignment

Understanding What You Have Learned

1. Write down the memory verse for this week.
-

Fill In the Blank

| | | | |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| calf | Mount | gold | Sinai |
|------|-------|------|-------|

2. The Lord called Moses to go up to _____ to receive the Ten Commandments.
3. When the Israelites saw that Moses was gone for a long time, they asked Aaron to make them a god who would lead and protect them. So Aaron asked them to give him their _____ and he made an idol in the shape of a _____.

True or False

4. Aaron and Hur were in charge of the Israelites while Moses went up to speak to the Lord. _____
5. When the Lord told Moses that He would destroy the Israelites, Moses was happy because he was tired of leading the Israelites. _____
6. The Lord was so angry when the Israelites worshiped the idol that He wanted to destroy the Israelites. _____

Multiple Choice

7. _____ : Moses was on the mountain for _____.
- a. Seven days and nights
 - b. Ten days and nights
 - c. Forty days and nights
 - d. One hundred days and nights
8. _____ : When Moses came down from the mountain and saw how the Israelites were worshipping the idol, _____.
- a. He threw the two tablets of stones on which the Ten Commandments were written on the ground because he was angry.
 - b. He melted and ground up the idol into powder, mixed it with water and made the Israelites drink it.
 - c. He told them that the Lord would destroy them and there was nothing he could do about it.
 - d. A and B only.

9. Why shouldn't we worship idols? Work with your mom or dad.

a. Read Psalm 135:15-18 and Jeremiah 10:1-6 together. List five reasons why we should not worship idols.

b. Read Jeremiah 10:11-13. List three reasons why we should worship God only. You may think of reasons other than the ones from this Bible passage.

c. Discuss with your mom or dad about any time you have seen an idol in a relative or friend's house. What should you do if you see an idol? What should you say to your relative or friend if they offer you something that has to do with the idol?

10. Let's get rid of the idols in our hearts!

a. Think of one thing you sometimes put as more important than God. (For example: a favorite toy you wish you could bring to church, watching a TV show when you should go to church service, or a friend at church you would rather play with instead of going in the chapel during service.)

b. Write 2 sentences about why you think this thing or person is special or important to you.

c. Write 2 sentences about why you think that God is more important than the thing or person.
