

# The Golden Calf

## Overview

### Materials You'll Need

- heart pattern
- construction paper
- scissors
- scraps, cotton balls
- glue
- markers



### Scriptures

Ex 32, 34:1-17

### Bible Truth Objective(s)

God is holy, He is the only one we worship.

### Behavioral Objective(s)

To know that God is holy and to worship Him through actions and words.

### Memory Verse

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



## Bible Knowledge

### The Golden Calf

After waiting for forty days and nights, the Israelites began to feel impatient at the bottom of Mount Sinai. After witnessing the glorious display of power, the people were actually more afraid of God than they were in awe. So as they waited, they probably didn't know what to expect, even though they had agreed to God's covenant. It is possible that they thought Moses was not going to return and thus asked Aaron to make for them other gods. It is interesting to note that they did not ask to make an idol so that they could worship the one true God. Instead, they decided to look to other gods and feel some sense of security.

In Canaan, the bull was commonly worshiped as Baal. Amon-Re, the Egyptian sun god, was also said to be a bull. Therefore, the decision by Aaron to mold a calf out of the gold seemed like the normal thing to do.

Once it was declared that "This is your god, O Israel," Aaron had led the people in breaking the

first two commandments: the people had more than one god and had also made an idol for themselves.

### The Two Stone Tablets

Because there were two stone tablets, many people think that the Ten Commandments were written in two sections. But Near Eastern practices usually have duplicates of binding covenants. One copy would belong to each party. Since Israel's copy needed to be placed near God, both tablets were placed in the ark (Ex 25:21).

In Exodus 31:18, it says that the tablets of stone were "written with the finger of God." While God obviously does not have human fingers, it does express the divine nature of the Law. Essentially, the Ten Commandments were not produced by man. Rather, they are the revelation from God.

Although Christ's death has freed us from the condemnation of the Law, Christians today still need to keep the Ten Commandments (Lk 18:18-20, 1 Cor 7:19, 1 Jn 5:2-3, Rev 14:12). They have never been abolished.



## Understanding Your Students

Children often have a difficult time really grasping who God is because they are not able to see Him, and have a limited understanding of Him at such a young age. In this lesson, the emphasis is that God is holy and He is the only one we can worship. We need to show respect to our God. We can try to make this concept more concrete to them through several discussion questions.

First, we can ask the students how they would feel if they were invited to visit a special place, like a big castle to visit a king or the White House where they could meet the president. When they get there, would they run around like they would at a playground? Probably not. They would know that they

have to walk nicely, single file, and use their inside voices. These are ways to show respect. If the president of the United States came over to shake their hands, would they call him George or Mr. President? These scenarios can help the students understand what it means to show respect.

Then we can ask the students how they are supposed to behave in the church, especially in the chapel. When there is service, what are the appropriate actions? (We need to be quiet so that everyone can hear the sermon. We sit nicely because we want to show God we love Him and He is our God.) What are things we can do in the class to show God respect? (We listen to the lesson and follow the teacher's instructions.) These are ways we honor our holy God because He is the only one who deserves our reverence.



## Vocabulary

### **Patient**

to wait without getting upset

### **Statue**

an image of a person or animal that is molded or cast

### **Destroy**

to ruin or make something not useful

### **Mercy**

to show kindness or forgiveness to someone



## Before You Teach

After God had brought them out of Egypt, the Israelites were now ready to be a holy nation, one set apart because of God. In Exodus 19:8, the people agreed to God's covenant by saying, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do." It was a promising beginning yet, after forty days, the same people broke their promise to God by making and worshiping a golden calf (Ex 31:18-32:5). Although God was angry to the point of wanting to destroy the people, He relented when Moses interceded on their behalf. Later, He even renewed the covenant (Ex 34:10).

In this entire episode, we see many different characteristics of God. When the people first entered into the covenant at the foot of Mount Sinai, God displayed His great power. He came upon Mount Sinai with lightning and thunder. The

sound of the trumpet was so loud, the people became frightened. Then God's presence was felt in the smoke and fire that had engulfed the mountain. This was indeed a sight to behold. There would have been no doubt that the almighty God was among them. We also see a God who is holy, for He wanted His people to become a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex 19:6).

But when the people made for themselves a golden calf, God became angry. Our God is a jealous God. He does not allow room for anything else to take His place in our lives. He is also just. Although He had relented when He heard Moses' plea for the people, He does not allow the wicked to get away with sin (Ex 32:33). When the day of judgment comes, everyone will be judged accordingly. But because God did relent, we see another contrasting side of Him: His mercy and grace. When we repent, God is quick to forgive. He is always giving us second chances. Our God is a God who is powerful and mighty and yet full of love and compassion.



## Bible Story

### **The Stone Tablets**

In the last lesson, we learned that Moses went up to Mount Sinai to get the laws (or rules) from God. The Israelites had promised to obey God and His commandments. God gave the Israelites many laws that taught them how to live a godly life. Some of the most important ones are called the Ten Commandments. Do you remember what they are? (Allow students to answer.) After God told Moses all the laws, God wrote them down on two stone tablets and gave them to Moses.

### **The Israelites Become Tired of Waiting**

Now remember that Moses had been on the mountain for forty days and nights, talking with God. That is a long time. While he was there, the Israelites waited at the bottom of the mountain. In the beginning, the Israelites were patient. That means they waited nicely for Moses to come down with God's laws. But after a while, they began to wonder when Moses was going to return. They were starting to get tired of waiting for him. Some of them went to Aaron, Moses' brother, and asked him what had happened to Moses.

"When is Moses going to come back down from the mountain?" they asked.

But Aaron didn't know the answer. Then some other Israelites got an idea.

They said to Aaron, "We don't know when Moses will return. He may not even come back since it is taking him so long. We don't know who this God is that Moses is supposed to be talking to. We need to make our own gods so that we can worship them."

When Aaron heard this, he didn't know what to do. He also wondered what was taking Moses so long. What if something had happened to him on the mountain and he was never going to come down again? Aaron thought about what the people had said. He began to think that they were right. If Moses didn't return, they would need to worship some god. So Aaron decided to follow the Israelites' idea.

"Okay, I agree with you. I think we should make these gods. But first, I will need a lot of gold from

everyone," Aaron told the people.

What did Aaron need the gold for? He needed the gold because he would melt all the gold in a hot fire. When gold is melted, it becomes soft. Then he could use the soft gold to shape it into a statue the people could bow down to.

### **The Golden Calf**

But where would the people get all this gold from? During that time, the people wore gold earrings. So the people took off all their gold earrings and gave them to Aaron. After Aaron took the earrings, he melted them and began to make it into a statue. But what kind of a statue would he make? (Allow students to guess.) Aaron decided that he would shape the soft gold into a calf, a young cow. When he was finally done, the people saw the golden calf and thought it was good.

Then they said out loud, "This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt."

Were they right? Did this golden calf save the people from Egypt? Of course not. It was God who had saved them. God was the one who performed the plagues. He was the one who gave them the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire. He was the one who parted the waters of the Red Sea so that the Israelites could walk on dry ground and escape from the Egyptian army. How could they say that this gold statue was their god? How do you think God felt when He saw all this happening at the bottom of the mountain? He was very angry!

### **God Is Angry**

"Look at the Israelites! They are bowing down to a golden calf. I will have to destroy them," said God angrily.

Moses knew that the people had done something very wrong. But he didn't want God to kill them all. So he begged for the Israelites.

"God, do you remember your promise to your people? You said they would become a great nation. Please give them one more chance," pleaded Moses.

When God heard Moses plead for the people, He said that He would not destroy them all. Then Moses went down from the mountain, holding the two stone tablets, with the Ten Commandments written on them.

## Moses Burns the Golden Calf

When Moses got close to the camp, he saw the people dancing and having a big party around this golden calf. They were worshiping this gold statue, instead of the true God. Moses became very angry too when he saw what the people were doing. He was so mad that he threw the two stone tablets onto the ground and they broke. Now, God's Ten Commandments were shattered into many pieces. Then Moses walked right up to the golden calf and threw it into a fire. The golden calf began to burn. When the gold had finished burning, Moses took what was left in the fire, ground it into a powder and mixed that with water. Then he made the Israelites drink it. Do you think that water tasted good? Probably not. Moses wanted the people to drink the water mixed with the powder so that they would know what they did was very wrong. Then Moses spoke.

"What are you doing? Do you know that you have done something very wrong? I am going to go speak to God again and hope that He will forgive you for what you have done," said Moses to the

people.

So Moses returned to God and asked Him to forgive the people. He begged God to have mercy. That means to be kind and forgive.

"I know the people have sinned by making this golden calf," said Moses. "But please forgive them."

When God heard Moses plead for the people, He forgave them. He also told Moses to make two new stone tablets so that He could write the Ten Commandments again.

## God Is Merciful

Even though the people had sinned because they made a golden calf and called it their god, God was still kind to them. He was angry at first, but He forgave them in the end. Our God is a merciful God. That means He is kind and loving, just like our own parents. Sometimes, when we do something wrong, our parents will get mad at us and talk with us. But in the end, they still forgive us because they love us. The Israelites were happy that they would not be destroyed. They were glad God loved them a lot.



## Check For Understanding

1. **Where did God write the Ten Commandments?** (He wrote them on two stone tablets.)
2. **How long was Moses on the mountain?** (Forty days and nights.)
3. **What did the people ask Aaron to do when they got tired of waiting for Moses?** (They asked him to make an idol for them to worship.)
4. **What kind of a statue did Aaron make with all the gold earrings?** (He shaped the melted, soft gold into a calf.)
5. **What did the people do when they saw this golden calf?** (They bowed down to worship it. They called it their god.)
6. **How did God feel when He saw what the**

**Israelite had done?** (He was angry and wanted to destroy them.)

7. **What did Moses do when he saw the golden calf?** (He threw the two stone tablets onto the ground and broke them. He also took the calf and burned it, making the people drink the burnt powder that had been mixed with water.)
8. **What did Moses do to help the people after they had sinned?** (He asked God to forgive them.)
9. **What did God do?** (Even though He was mad, He still forgave the people because He is a kind and loving God.)
10. **Who can we worship today?** (Allow students to answer. We can only worship the one true God.)
11. **How can we worship God?** (Allow students to offer ideas.)





## Life Application Story

### Do Not Use God's Name in Vain

Benjamin was playing his favorite video game on the computer in his room. It was after dinner. He had already finished his homework so Mrs. Lim said it was okay for Ben to play for 20 minutes. He was getting really excited because he was about to beat his own all-time high score. He only needed ten more points. His fingers kept pushing down on the mouse. Suddenly, his screen went blank and the room went dark.

"What happened?" yelled Benjamin.

His dad came to his room.

"I think the electricity is out. I am going to go check downstairs. Do you want to stay here while I get some flashlights or do you want to come with me?"

Benjamin knew he didn't want to stay in his room all by himself in the dark.

"I am coming with you, Dad," said Ben as he got off his chair.

The two of them walked downstairs slowly so that they wouldn't trip. By the time they got to the kitchen, Mrs. Lim, Nicole, Lisa and Susie were already there. Mrs. Lim and Nicole were trying to light some candles so that they could see better.

"I am going to use the cell phone and call the electric company to see what is going on," said Mr. Lim.

Everyone else just stood around the kitchen table, not really knowing what to do.

"Well," said Mrs. Lim, "at least, it is night time. Even if we don't get the lights back on tonight, we can at least go to sleep."

"Oh my God! You mean, we may not have any lights for the whole night?" cried Ben. He wanted to go back to his computer game and try to get that high score again.

"Benjamin Lim," said Mrs. Lim. "Who taught you to say, 'Oh my God!'"

"No one," replied Ben innocently. "Everyone at school says it."

Mrs. Lim tried to explain to Ben and the other kids, "Just because everyone says it doesn't make it okay for us to say it. Do you know why?"

Nicole knew the answer. "When we say 'Oh my God,' we are using God's name in a bad way. We

aren't really talking to God when we say that. In the Ten Commandments, God tells us we should not use His name in vain."

Mrs. Lim smiled at Nicole.

"Your sister is right, Ben. We should never use God's name unless we mean it. If we just say it whenever we want to, we are not showing God we respect Him. When we respect someone, we take care not to hurt this person's feelings. We do our best to show that we love him and care about him. We can use His name when we want to ask Him for help or when we pray to Him," continued Mrs. Lim.

"Or we could say it when we want to say, 'I love God,'" added Susie.

"Yes, that is also a time we could say God's name," said Mrs. Lim.

Just then, Mr. Lim came back to the room.

"Well, it looks like the power is out only on our block. The company said they have already sent out a team to come fix the problem. Hopefully, we can get some light back in about an hour."

"What can we do while we are waiting? It's so dark," whispered Lisa.

"Why don't we sing some hymns to God? That is another way we can use God's name. We want to show Him He is our God, a holy God whom we worship," suggested Mrs. Lim.

Everyone agreed it was a good idea. As they began to sing, Benjamin thought about what his mom had just said. From now on, he decided he would try hard to not use God's name in a bad way. He wanted God to know that he loved Him very much and would not hurt His feelings by saying God's name in vain.

### Questions to Think About

1. **What was Ben doing when the lights went out?** (He was playing a video game.)
2. **What did Ben say when he thought that the lights would not come back on all night?** (He said, "Oh my God.")
3. **What is wrong with saying that?** (We are not using God's name in a good way. We are just saying His name without really meaning to talk to God.)
4. **What is the third commandment?** (We should not use God's name in vain.)
5. **When can we use God's name? How else can we show that God is holy and we need to respect Him?** (Allow students to answer.)



## Activity 1

### The Golden Calf

Look at the picture of the people worshiping the golden calf. Is that the right thing to do? Put an "X" over the golden calf to show that we do not worship anything besides the true God.

What did Moses do when he saw the people worshiping the golden calf? He threw the two stone tablets that had the Ten Commandments written on them onto the ground. What happened to the two tablets? (They broke.)



## Activity 2

### Obeying God With Our Actions

Help the students put together the spinner. They can cut out the circle and glue it onto a piece of construction paper to make it more sturdy. Attach the spinner with a paper fastener. Have each child spin their spinners and discuss the picture the arrow points to. How can they obey God with their actions?



## Activity 3

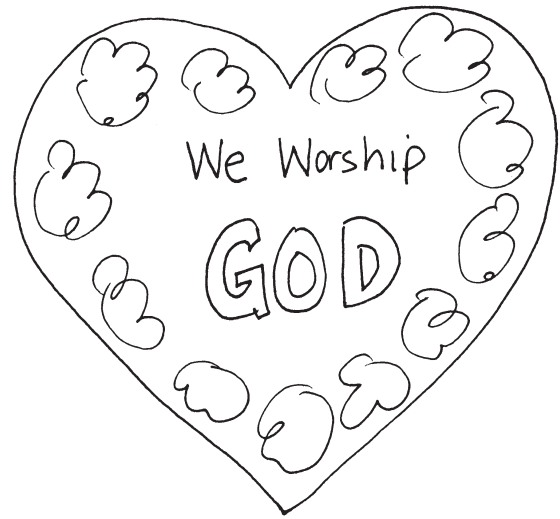
### Who Can We Worship?

#### Materials:

1. heart pattern and construction paper
2. scraps, cotton balls
3. glue
4. markers
5. scissors

#### Directions:

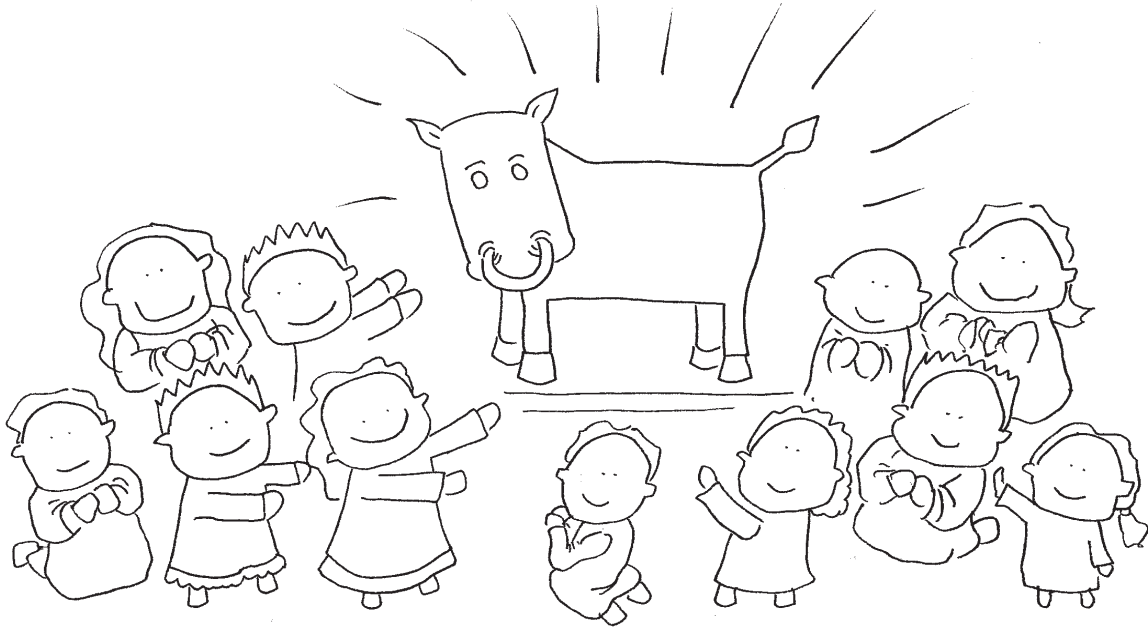
1. Cut a large heart shape out of a piece of construction paper.
2. In the middle of the paper, write the words "We worship God."
3. Now decorate the heart by gluing cotton balls around the edges of the heart. The students can also use markers.
4. As the students work on their projects, remind them that we can only worship God.



Activity 10:1

### The Golden Calf

Look at the picture of the golden calf. Is that what God wants us to do?  
Put an "X" over the calf to show that we should not bow down to an idol.



Look at the picture of Moses. What did he do when he saw the golden calf?  
What happened to the stone tablets?



Activity 10:2

### Obeying God With Our Actions

Help the students put together the spinner. They can cut out the circle and glue it onto a piece of construction paper to make it more sturdy. Attach the spinner with a paper fastener. Have each child spin their spinners and discuss the picture the arrow points to. How can they obey God with their actions?

