Session 6

The Israelites Worship a Golden Calf

Exodus 32:1-25

Worship Theme:

God alone is worthy of worship.

Weaving Faith Into Life:

Kids will worship God with wholehearted devotion.

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| Let’s Praise God! (up to 25 minutes) | Sing  
  • “Faith”  
  • “My God is Powerful”  
  • “Every Move I Make” |          |

Elementary Bible Lesson- LEMONS!
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<td>Act out ways to say “thank you,” and see what it</td>
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<td>feels like when the wrong person is thanked.</td>
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<td><strong>Only One God</strong></td>
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<td>Play a singing game to discover why we worship only</td>
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<td><strong>Who Is Worthy of Worship?</strong></td>
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<td><strong>“Thank Who?”</strong></td>
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<td>Watch and discuss a DVD segment.</td>
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<td><strong>God in Sight</strong></td>
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<td>Make journals for sightings of God’s work to gather</td>
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The Israelites Worship a Golden Calf

Exodus 32:1-25

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 had been used to seeing “gods” in Egypt. They had been asked to serve a God they couldn’t see. They had 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 asked for a god they could see who would lead them on.

Why didn’t Aaron stand up for God and oppose the people’s request? Apparently, he too had some doubt about Moses’ return. However, some believe that Aaron’s request for the 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. Once the gold was in his hands, the cowardly Aaron had little choice but to craft a golden idol.

Notice that after making the idol, Aaron’s proclamation was that there was to 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. It appears that Aaron thought that this idol would represent the true God. However well-intentioned his motives, Aaron was wrong in making the idol. He was leading the people in disobeying God’s second commandment, “You shall not make for yourself an idol” (Exodus 20:4).

Aaron’s response to Moses’ questioning revealed his feeble nature. He 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.

Devotion for Leaders

Our salvation through faith in Jesus makes us want to worship and obey him.

Weaving Faith Into Your Life: We are surrounded with 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. What blessings in your life have you taken for granted? Our families, our homes, our material possessions, and other blessings should drive us to acknowledge and worship God. Concentrate this week on finding God’s hand in the blessings in your life, and worship him by giving praise for those gifts.
Easy Prep for Leaders

Who Is Worthy of Worship?

• Make two photocopies of the script at the end of this session. Invite two adults to play the roles of Moses and Aaron, and rehearse the skit with them. Have them wear simple Bible costumes, if possible.

• Print the three questions on separate index cards, and number the cards 1 through 3.

“Thank Who?”

**#1 Let’s Praise God!**

Greet children by name. Give each child a sincere compliment, and then direct the praise to God. For example, say, “Susan, you have a beautiful smile. God gave you that smile. That’s something only God could do,” or “Trevor, your red hair is the perfect color for you. Only God could make so many shades of red and choose just the right shade for you.”

When you’re ready to begin, welcome the children warmly.

I’m going to ask you some questions to help you figure out why we are here today. Shout out a one-word answer to each question. Ready?

• Who is always perfect?

• Who is always good?

• Who is always loving?

• Who is always kind?

• Who is always wise?

• How many answers did you have to think of?

Those answers give us the one reason we are here. There is one God, and we are to worship only him. No matter how many times we gather together, we have only one purpose—to worship only God, who is always perfect, good, loving, kind, and wise. No one and nothing else deserves our worship.

We’ve come together to praise God for his power, wisdom, and blessings. God alone deserves our praise and honor. Let’s honor the one and only God with the song, “Faith.”

Sing “Faith”

God made the land and sea. God made all creatures. The song we just sang tells everything that lives to praise God.
God gives hope and salvation to those who ask for it. God is our friend, and he loves us. He alone is worthy of worship. Let’s sing a new song, “My God is Powerful.”

Sing “My God Is Powerful.”

Lyrics are in the back of this book.

God is greater than anything or anyone anywhere! God is the greatest! Find three people, right now, and tell each one a different reason you believe God is the greatest.

Give the children time to do this.

Today we’ll make thank-you chains to thank God for all he has done. Our chains will prove that God deserves the credit for every good thing in our lives.

Have children form groups of five. Have one group come up front to help you demonstrate.

Food is something I am thankful for.

Choose one of the children to represent food.

I can thank my mom for making the food.

Choose one child to represent Mom. Have this child stand next to the food child.

I can thank the grocer for selling the food to my mom.

Choose a “grocer” to stand next to the child representing Mom.

I can thank the farmer for growing the food.

Choose a “farmer” to stand next to the “grocer.”

But God is the final one I can thank because he created food, the ground it grows in, the rain that waters it, the sun that shines on it, and the people who provide it for me! Ultimately all thanks go back to God because nothing would exist without him. That’s why God alone deserves our worship. God alone provides all we need.

Let the demonstration group sit down.

Each group should think of something to be thankful for and then make a thank you chain like the one you just saw.

Give the children time to do this. Then let each group come to the front to explain its thank you chain.

Now we’re going to sing “Every Move I Make” to remind us that everything comes from God and we should follow his plan!

Sing “Every Move I Make”
The Offering

Today we are going to learn that the Israelites made a poor choice concerning their treasure, the gold jewelry they brought out of Egypt. They made a golden calf to replace the one true God.

We give our treasure, our offerings, to God to show we worship him and not the treasure God has given to us. Everything we have belongs to God. Our offerings remind us that God is more important than our treasure. As you give your offerings today, remember that God alone is worthy of worship.

God, we worship you. You alone are worthy of our praise. We give these gifts to show our love. Our treasures belong to you. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Take the offering.

#2 Learn the Point & Activities

Dismiss Preschoolers.

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.

Have kids celebrate and party like the Israelites did. Stand up, shout, jump up and down, etc.

After a minute, have the kids sit back down.

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.

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.

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.

**Who Is Worthy of Worship?** *(Skit scripts are at the end of lesson)*

Have the “Moses” and “Aaron” volunteers sit in chairs at the front, as if they were game-show contestants. Encourage the children to act as though they are in a game-show studio. Give the three question cards to volunteers from the “studio audience.”

Present the skit.

- **Which god do you think is worthy of worship and why?** (Moses’ God, because he’s always been here; Moses’ God, because he’s the one true God.)
- **Why do you think the Israelites chose the golden calf when it’s so clear that God is the only real God?** (They didn’t know God was still there; they chose to disobey God.)

The evidence is clear. God alone is worthy of worship. Nothing on earth compares to our God. Let’s give a real studio-audience round of applause to the one who deserves all glory and praise.

**“Thank Who?”**

Show the DVD segment titled “Thank Who?” It shows people getting credit for other people’s accomplishments. After the video, ask the following questions:

- **How do you think the people felt when other people got credit for what they’d done?** (Angry; sad; cheated.)
- **Has this ever happened to you?** (When I worked with a friend on a project, he took all the credit; I spent all summer teaching my sister to ride her bike, but she got all the credit.)
- **How did you feel?** (It was OK, because my sister did do a good job; it made me mad; I felt like no one cared about me.)
- **Can you think of anyone or anything who sometimes gets the credit for things that God has done?** (Doctors; people who help others; rich people; movie stars.)
- **How do you think God feels about this?** (It probably makes him mad; it hurts his feelings.)
- **Why does God alone deserve our worship?** (God created everything; God can do anything and is better than anyone.)

God alone is worthy of worship. He can do what no one else can do. Nothing would exist without God. Without God’s help, we couldn’t do anything—we wouldn’t even be here! God deserves all praise.
There are many reasons to worship, praise, and thank God. There are many reasons God alone is worthy of worship. We’ve talked about some of these today. Take your journals home, and use them to remind you to watch for God and to worship only him. No one else is worthy!

Let’s Pray!
Session 6

The Israelites Worship a Golden Calf

Exodus 32:1-25

Worship Theme:

God alone is worthy of worship.

Easy Prep for Leaders

None is necessary.

Golden Calf

Gather the children.

After God rescued his people, the Israelites, from Egypt, he invited their leader, Moses, to come to the top of a great, big mountain. There, God gave Moses a list of rules for his people to follow—rules that would help them do right. Moses was up on the mountain with God for a very long time.

• Can anyone tell me of a time when your mom or dad was gone for a very long time?

• How did you feel when your mom or dad was gone so long?

When Moses was gone for a very long time, the Israelites began to worry. They thought Moses was dead! They thought God had left them, too. They asked Moses’ brother, Aaron, to make them a new god. So Aaron collected all of their jewelry to make this new god.

Aaron built a big fire. Let’s imagine that we have a big fire here in our room. Have the children form a circle and then blow into the center as though they are fanning a fire.

The people all gave Aaron their gold jewelry. He put it into the fire, and it melted together. Then Aaron made the melted gold into the shape of a calf, a baby cow, for the people to worship like a god.

• Why do you think the people wanted to worship a baby cow made of gold?

It seems kind of silly that the Israelites wanted to worship something that was really just a statue. Let’s find out why it was so silly.

Set out a toy cow. (If you can’t find a toy cow, a picture of a cartoon cow will be fine!)
• If this were a real cow, what would it eat?
• Does this toy cow really eat anything?
• If this were a real cow, what kinds of sounds would it make?
• Does this toy cow make any sounds?

This is a toy cow. It doesn’t eat, and it doesn’t make any sounds. Toy cows can’t walk or see or do any of the things that a real cow does. Now let’s do some pretending. Let’s pretend that we’re all cows.

Have the children pretend to be cows. Have them walk around on all fours, pretend to eat grass, and “moo.” After a minute of pretending, have the children act like children again.

• Just a moment ago you were walking like cows and mooing like cows, but were you real cows?

No, you weren’t real cows even though you were pretending. And the golden calf wasn’t really God even though the Israelites were acting as if the cow were really God.

Aaron was wrong to make a calf for people to worship. God is the only one we are to worship. He’s the only one who is really God.

• How strong is God?

• What can God do?

Pretend cows can’t do anything. But God can do everything! Only God is worthy of worship.

When God saw that the Israelites had tried to replace him with a calf, he was very angry. Moses was angry, too. Moses came down from the mountain and got rid of the idol. He tore it apart and told the people to worship only God.

Let’s shout the worshipping words God wanted to hear from the Israelites: “We love God.” Chant the words with the children several times.

Only God deserves our shouts of worship.

**Thankful Acts**

Gather the children in front of you.

Our God can do anything. He’s everywhere at once. He knows everything there is to know. He has the power to do anything he wants to do.

• If you were God, what would you do today?

Give each child a turn to answer.
Our God is very busy every day. He’s watching over every single person—(point to each child) you and you and you and you.

God heals the sick and helps people who are sad. He gives ideas to people who want to help him with his work. God answers prayers. God helps us every single day because he loves all people.

Imagine that you wanted to do something special to make your mom or dad happy.

• What could you do?

Choose a child to answer, and then choose volunteers to join that child to act out the idea. For example, if the child suggests drawing a picture as a gift for Mom, choose a volunteer to be Mom. Let the child pretend to draw the picture and give it to Mom.

When the children finish acting out the scene, thank a different child for making the mom in the story happy. Ad lib this part, gushing about how special the act was. Continue until the children protest that you’re thanking the wrong person.

• How would you feel if someone else was thanked for doing something you did?

That might be how God feels when we don’t remember to thank him for the good things he does for us. God has created a big, beautiful world for us to enjoy. He watches over his people and gives them what they need. When we don’t honor God for what he has done, or when we give the credit to someone else and leave God out, God feels bad.

Let other children suggest special things they could do for others. Choose volunteers to help them act out their ideas, repeating the above activity three or four times.

God alone is worthy of worship! When good things happen, let’s remember to give God thanks and praise.

*Only One God*

Have the children stand in a circle.

Let’s play a game with this song to learn why God alone deserves our worship. Give a big, bouncy ball to one child.

Bounce the ball back and forth to each other across the circle. I’ll have a question for the child who is holding the ball when the song is done. Have the children pass the ball while you lead the song again.

• Where is God right now?

Yes—God is there! God is everywhere. Only God can be everywhere at once. God alone is worthy of worship.
Play the game five more times. Ask the child holding the ball at the end of each round one of the following questions:

- How many gods are there to worship?
- Who makes the flowers grow?
- Who sends the rain?
- Who watches over you all day and all night and never sleeps?
- Who answers prayers?

No one but God can do those things. God alone is worthy of worship. Let’s remember to only worship God.
Who Is Worthy of Worship?

Leader: Welcome to the game show *Who Is Worthy of Worship?* where we will determine just that! Today we have Moses and Aaron, each claiming to represent a god. Members of our studio audience will question these “ambassadors of the awesome” to find out Who Is Worthy of Worship? Let’s begin. Who has the first question for our representatives?

Question #1: How did your god come to exist?

Aaron: That’s an easy one! I collected all the gold jewelry in our camp, melted it, and made a beautiful golden calf for the Israelites to bow down to.

Moses: My God has always been here. He created all things; he existed before anything else did.

Leader: Question #2.

Question #2: Why did you choose to worship this god?

Aaron: Moses had been gone for a long time. The people thought God had left them. They needed someone to worship, so I made them a new god. They asked me to...

Moses: God commanded me in person. He said, “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of...slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.” I worship the one true God. There is no other god to worship.

Leader: Question #3.

Question #3: Why is your god worthy of worship?

Aaron: I threw gold jewelry into the fire and fashioned a golden calf. We decided it was a god.

Moses: There are many reasons God alone is worthy of worship. God created everything. God answers prayer. God rescues his people when no one else can. He deserves their worship and praise.

Leader: The representatives have spoken. Now it is time for our choice.