

He provided His Son, Jesus, for our spiritual hunger.
The Israelites needed bread to live for little while, but
whoever has Jesus will live forever!

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute pencils and journal pages. Remind kids that God provided for the physical needs of His people. Prompt kids to write a short prayer thanking God for His provision in a time of need.

As time allows, lead kids to complete “Food for Life” on the activity page. Kids should cross out every third letter from left to right, starting on the top row and working down. Kids will fill in the blanks to reveal the answer to, *Who does Jesus say He is? (Jesus is the Bread of life.)* Guide kids to refer to John 6:31-35 to confirm the answer.

- pencils
- Journal Page
- “Food for Life” activity page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week's *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.

The Golden Calf

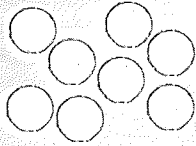
BIBLE PASSAGE: Exodus 32:1-35; 34:1-9

MAIN POINT: God punished His people for worshiping a golden calf.

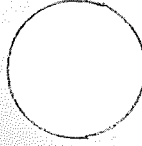
KEY PASSAGE: Hebrews 3:5-6

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is God's plan? God's plan is to rescue His people from captivity.

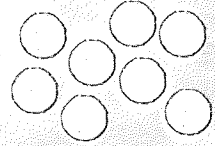
SMALL GROUP OPENING
(10-15 MINUTES)
PAGE 58



LARGE GROUP BIBLE STUDY
(25-30 MINUTES)
PAGE 60



SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES
(25-30 MINUTES)
PAGE 66



4

Leader BIBLE STUDY

God led His people into the wilderness, but He did not leave them there alone. The Lord was with His people. He provided meat, bread, and water. He guided them to Mount Sinai, where He met with their leader, Moses. The Lord came down on the mountain in fire and He spoke through thunder. The Israelites could not have ignored His presence.

But when Moses went up on the mountain and did not return for several weeks, the Israelites felt abandoned. They appealed to Moses' brother, Aaron: "Come, make us a god who will go before us because this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt—we don't know what has happened to him!" (Ex. 32:1)

Aaron's response led the people to commit a terrible sin. He gathered gold from the people and made an image of a calf, and the people worshiped the golden calf. God saw what the people were doing, and He told Moses to go down the mountain at once. Moses confronted his brother. Aaron claimed that when the people gave him the gold, he threw it into the fire, and "out came this calf!" (Ex. 32:24)

God punished His people for worshiping a golden calf, and Moses returned to the mountain to ask the Lord to forgive the Israelites' sin. Moses could not atone for the people's sin; God said He would hold the people accountable for their sins, but the Lord did not abandon the Israelites.

Introduce the kids you teach to the concept of idolatry. An *idol* is anything a person puts in the place of God. Explain that idolatry is a sin. The Israelites deserved to be punished for their sin. In the same way, we deserve to be punished for our sin. Point out that Jesus never sinned. He is greater than Moses, and when we sin, Jesus not only talks to the Father for us, He atones for our sin. God forgives those who trust in Jesus.



MINISTRY GRID
training made simple

Additional resources for each session are available at gospelproject.com. For free training and session-by-session help, visit www.ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject.

The BIBLE STORY

The Golden Calf

Exodus 32:1-35; 34:1-9

Moses and the Israelites were in the wilderness. God had delivered them from slavery in Egypt and from Pharaoh and his pursuing army. The Israelites **came to Mount Sinai** (SIGH nigh), and they camped there in front of the mountain. **Moses went up the mountain, and God spoke to him.**

God had a lot to tell Moses, and **Moses was up on Mount Sinai for 40 days and 40 nights. Meanwhile, the Israelites camping at the base of the mountain were getting impatient.** They began to wonder, *Where is Moses? What is taking him so long? Is he still alive?*

The Israelites went to Moses' brother, Aaron. "Make us a god to lead us," they said. "Moses led us out of Egypt, but we don't know what has happened to him."

So Aaron made a gold calf that they could worship.

God saw what the people were doing, and He was angry because of their sin. God told Moses to go down the mountain. "I will destroy these people," God said.

"Please forgive them," Moses said. "Remember the great promise You made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. You promised to give them as many offspring as there are stars in the sky. You promised to bless them and give them land." **So God decided not to destroy the people.**

Moses went down the mountain. He carried two stone tablets on which God had written the laws. Moses got closer to the camp and saw that the people were dancing before the gold calf! He threw down the stone tablets, smashing them at the bottom of the mountain. Then he destroyed the calf they made.

“What were you thinking?” Moses asked Aaron. The people were out of control.

The next day, Moses said, “I will go up to the Lord. Maybe I can do something to make up for your sin.” So Moses went back up the mountain to talk to God.

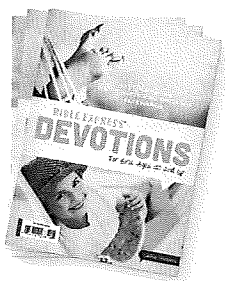
“These people have sinned against You. They made a god out of gold for themselves,” Moses said. **“Please forgive their sin.”**

God told Moses to return to the people. “When the time comes, I will punish them for their sin,” God said. Then the Lord sent a plague—a terrible sickness—to the people because they worshiped the gold calf.

God continued to meet with Moses and give him laws and instructions. He made two more stone tablets to replace the ones Moses broke. One morning, Moses went up the mountain to meet with God. The Lord came down in a cloud. He said, “Yahweh is a compassionate and gracious God ... but He will not leave the guilty unpunished.”

Moses bowed down and worshiped God. “Lord, please go with us,” he said. **“Forgive our sin, and accept us as Your people.”**

Christ Connection: God’s people sinned against God, and Moses asked God to forgive them. Moses acted as their mediator, standing for them before God. Moses could not do anything to make up for their sin, but we have a better Mediator—Jesus. Jesus paid for our sin on the cross and stands for us before God. When we trust in Jesus, our sins are forgiven.



**WANT TO
DISCOVER
GOD'S WORD?
GET
BIBLE EXPRESS!**

Invite kids to check out this week's devotionals to discover that Jesus speaks to God on our behalf. When we sin, we ask Jesus to forgive us. We must also pray for each other (James 5:16), as Moses prayed for the Israelites. Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information, check out www.lifeway.com/devotionals.

Small Group OPENING

SESSION TITLE: The Golden Calf

BIBLE PASSAGE: Exodus 32:1-35; 34:1-9

MAIN POINT: God punished His people for worshipping a golden calf.

KEY PASSAGE: Hebrews 3:5-6

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is God's plan? God's plan is to rescue His people from captivity.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. As kids arrive, ask for volunteers to share about a time they did something wrong.

SAY • What was the situation? Did you receive a punishment? How did it make you feel?

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "Golden Calves" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete "Golden Calves" on the activity page. Challenge kids to find 20 hidden golden calves.

SAY • In today's Bible story, Moses' brother Aaron made a golden calf that the Israelites could worship. Worshipping the golden calf was a sin against God. God is compassionate and gracious, but He will not leave the guilty unpunished. **God punished His people for worshipping a golden calf.**



- index cards
- markers

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Slap calf

Before the session, write the words of the main point on separate index cards: **God punished His people for**

worshipping a golden calf. Make a set for each group of three kids. Mix up the cards and evenly distribute them facedown between a group's players.

Players will simultaneously turn their top card faceup. If a player sees the word *calf*, he should slap down his hand over the card. That player wins the round. He will collect all the cards, mix them up, and distribute them to play again.

SAY • In today's Bible story the Israelites worshiped a golden calf. To *worship* is "to greatly respect or admire; to be devoted to; to highly value or honor."
God punished His people for worshipping a golden calf. Let's find out more.

OPTION 2: Golden calf knock-down

Before the session, print and cut apart the "Golden Calf" graphic sheet. Divide kids into pairs. Give each pair 10 plastic cups, masking tape, a golden calf, and a foam ball. Direct kids to use masking tape to affix the golden calf to one cup.

Guide kids to construct a triangle-shaped structure with plastic cups. Tell kids to start with four cups on the bottom row, three cups in the next row, and then two cups in the next row. Tell kids to place the cup with the golden calf at the top of the pyramid. Instruct kids to stand several feet away and try to use the ball to knock down the golden calf.

SAY • Today we are going to discover that Moses destroyed the golden calf the Israelites worshiped.

Option: Designate different words for kids to slap or guide kids to slap the words of the main point in the correct order.

- "Golden Calf" printable
- plastic cups, 10
- masking tape
- foam balls

Transition to large group

Large Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: The Golden Calf

BIBLE PASSAGE: Exodus 32:1-35; 34:1-9

MAIN POINT: God punished His people for worshipping a golden calf.

KEY PASSAGE: Hebrews 3:5-6

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is God's plan? God's plan is to rescue His people from captivity.

Countdown

- countdown video

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as large group time begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

- leader attire
- water bottle
- "Great Race Clue Card" printable
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- scissors
- envelope
- Bible
- map of Egypt

Before the session, print a copy of the Bible story picture poster on heavyweight paper, and cut it into several pieces. Enclose the puzzle in an envelope.

[Large Group Leader wearing athletic attire with a solid color T-shirt, holding a water bottle, Great Race clue card, and Bible. A map of Egypt is secured to the wall.]

LEADER • Hi, boys and girls. I'm so glad you're all here today! I'm [*your name*] and I'm a contestant on this season's greatest game, The Great Race! It's so hot in the desert! [*Dramatically pant for water.*] I'm so thirsty; I'm glad I have this water bottle God provided! Look! [*Hold up Great Race clue card.*] Here's my next clue card. Let's find out what it says:
*Detour at Mount Sinai: Piece it together.
Complete the puzzle to identify the golden god that the Israelites worshiped. Then proceed to the Great Race final challenge!*

Oh, wow! I'm almost to the final challenge! Will you all help me so I can complete this detour super fast? You will? Great!

Ask volunteers to piece together the puzzle.

LEADER • Awesome job! You all pieced together a golden calf! Let's find out why the Israelites worshiped a golden calf in our Bible story today.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

LEADER • Let's see where we are on our giant timeline.

A couple of weeks ago, we learned that God sent plagues to punish the Egyptians for their sin. Do you remember why? The Egyptians worshiped false gods like Ra, the sun god, and Hapi, the god of the Nile. (Ex. 7:4-5) But through the plagues, **God proved to the Egyptians that He is the one true God.**

Today we are right about ... here! [*Point to today's story.*] This says "The Golden Calf." Uh oh! That sounds like a false god, too. What do you think?

• Giant Timeline

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Our big picture question is, *What is God's plan? God's plan is to rescue His people from captivity.* In the previous few weeks, we heard how God rescued the Israelites from physical captivity. In today's Bible story, God's planned to rescue the Israelites from captivity to sin. Let's listen.

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Exodus 32. Tell the Bible story in your own words, or show the Bible story video "The Golden Calf."

- Bibles
- "The Golden Calf" video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster

LEADER • Moses and the Israelites were in the wilderness, a desert. God was with them, and He had a plan. *What is God's plan? God's plan is to rescue His people from captivity.*

God's people had experienced His grace and His power in Egypt through the plagues and Passover. They had seen Him act in a mighty way at the Red Sea. In the wilderness, God showed the Israelites He was with them when He provided water for them to drink. Every morning, God provided bread from heaven and, every evening, God sent quail into the camp. God showed them He is *Yahweh*, "the I AM." God called Himself "the Lord your God."

But without their leader Moses, the Israelites were confused about whom to follow. So they asked Aaron to make a golden calf that they could worship. God's people were out of control. They danced and worshiped the golden calf. God saw their sin, and He was angry.

Moses asked God to forgive the Israelites. Moses acted as their mediator, standing for them before God. Moses could not do anything to make up for their sin, and **God punished His people for worshiping a golden calf.**

But God had a plan! *What is God's plan? God's plan is to rescue His people from captivity*, not only physical captivity like He rescued the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, but spiritual captivity—slavery to sin. God sent His Son, Jesus, to be a better Mediator. Jesus paid for our sin on the cross and stands for us before God. When we trust in Jesus, our sins are forgiven. What good news!

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me (optional)

Use Scripture and the guide provided with this session to explain to boys and girls how to become a Christian. Assign individuals to meet with kids who have more questions. Encourage boys and girls to ask their parents, small group leaders, or other Christian adults any questions they may have about becoming a Christian.

Tip: Provide *I'm a Christian Now* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Hebrews 3:5-6.

LEADER • Our key passage tells us to “hold on to the courage and confidence of our hope” (Heb. 3:6). Whom do you think we should place our hope in? (*Jesus*) That's right!

In our Bible story today, God's people put their hope in a golden calf. Today, we might sometimes place our hope in things like having a lot of friends or getting good grades. If we follow Jesus, we will turn from hoping in these things and hope in Jesus alone.

Review the hand motions from the previous sessions. Choose a couple of volunteers to lead the boys and girls to perform the hand motions as they read the verse aloud.

- Key Passage Poster
- “Confidence of Our Hope” song

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

Show the “Unit 4, Session 4” discussion starter video.

LEADER • Samuel was being silly. Was Samuel able to make the real game? Samuel wanted the game so much that he made up his own and played it, even though it was pretty bad. Sin makes us do foolish things. When Moses went up the mountain, the people

- “Unit 4, Session 4” discussion starter video

thought God had left them, so they made their own god to worship. But the statue had no power. Lead kids to discuss things people might worship today. Explain that an *idol* is anything we worship in the place of God. People might worship other people, themselves, or possessions.

Sing (4 minutes)

• “Freedom” song

LEADER • The Bible says that sin holds us captive, but Jesus came to set us free. Let’s praise Him.

Sing together “Freedom.”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups.

LEADER • Lord God, We thank You that You are compassionate and gracious. We know that You do not leave the guilty unpunished. We admit that we, like the Israelites, worship things other than You. That is sin. But when we trust in Jesus—who died on the cross and took the punishment we deserve—You forgive our sins. We praise You, Father, for Jesus, who stands for us before You. This is such good news! We love You. Amen.

Dismiss to small groups

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means "good news." It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:19.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus.

Small Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: The Golden Calf

BIBLE PASSAGE: Exodus 32:1-35; 34:1-9

MAIN POINT: God punished His people for worshipping a golden calf.

KEY PASSAGE: Hebrews 3:5-6

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is God's plan? God's plan is to rescue His people from captivity.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- index cards
- marker

Before the session, write the key passage on several index cards, one phrase per card. Make two sets.

Display the key passage poster. Lead the kids to read Hebrews 3:5-6 aloud together.

Form two groups. Choose a volunteer from each group to distribute the key passage phrase cards to each kid in his group. Explain that groups should race to arrange themselves in the correct order without talking. When a group finishes, players should sit down.

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster
- numbered cube

Invite kids to sit in a circle. Distribute Bibles and instruct kids to open their Bibles to Exodus 32.

Ask a volunteer to roll the numbered cube. Challenge kids to answer the question below that corresponds to the rolled number. If needed, encourage them to use the Scripture reference provided to help answer the question.

1. Why did the Israelites get impatient? (*The Israelites were impatient because Moses was up on Mount Sinai for 40 days and 40 nights, Ex. 32:1*)
2. What false god did Aaron make for the Israelites to worship? (*a golden calf, Ex. 32:4*)

3. How did God punish the Israelites for worshipping the gold calf? (*God sent a plague, a terrible sickness; Ex. 32:35*)
4. The Lord came down in a cloud. What did He say? (*“Yahweh is a compassionate and gracious God ... but He will not leave the guilty unpunished,” Ex. 34:5-7*)
5. Moses stood before the Israelites and God. He acted as their what? (*mediator, Ex. 32:11-14*)
6. Who is our Mediator? (*Jesus, 1 Tim. 2:5*)

SAY • In today’s Bible story, God’s people sinned against God. They worshiped a golden calf while Moses was up on the mountain. Why was it wrong for them to worship the golden calf? (*Only God deserves our worship.*)

Worshipping anything other than God is sin, and just like God punished His people for worshipping a golden calf, God must punish all sin. Thankfully, God had a plan to punish sin through Jesus’ death on the cross! It was God’s plan from the beginning. ***What is God’s plan? God’s plan is to rescue His people from captivity***—especially captivity to sin. When we trust in Jesus, our sins are forgiven. What good news!

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Clay cows

Give each kid a fist-sized lump of yellow clay or play dough. Encourage them to knead the clay and form a golden calf.

SAY • Those are some very neat golden calves! Now I want you to do something. Everyone, smash your calves! In today’s Bible story, the Israelites worshiped a golden calf. They turned away from the one true



• yellow play dough or modeling clay

God to worship a false god.

God punished His people for worshipping a golden calf. When we love anything more than God—ourselves, other people, or created things—we too are guilty of sin. Can you think of something in your life that might be an idol? What would it look like to “smash” the false gods we worship?

Option: Review the gospel with boys and girls. Explain that kids are welcome to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.

Encourage kids that we have a better Mediator—Jesus. Jesus paid for our sin on the cross and stands for us before God. When we trust in Jesus, God forgives our sin.

OPTION 2: Cross or calf?

- large pieces of paper, 2
- marker
- tape

Before the session, draw a cross on a large piece of paper and hang it at one side of the room. Draw a cow on another piece of paper and hang it at the other side of the room.

Instruct kids to stand in the middle of the room. Tell kids the cross represents Jesus and the calf represents false gods. Direct kids to listen to each statement. If it describes worshipping the one true God, they should move to the cross. If it describes worshipping a false god, they should move to the cow.

1. Your sports team is undefeated, and you are the star athlete. Your next game is on a Sunday, but you go to church with your family. You choose to go to church instead of playing with your team. (*cross*)
2. You find \$10 at the grocery store. You decide to keep without trying to find who may have lost it. (*calf*)
3. You lie and tell your mother you have completed your homework so you can watch TV. (*calf*)
4. You make your bed and clean your room before your parents ask you to, because God wants us to honor our parents. (*cross*)

5. You help a new boy or girl at school make friends.
(*cross*)

SAY • In today's Bible story, **God punished His people for worshiping a golden calf.** A golden calf may seem silly to you, but we too worship false gods sometimes. When we put ourselves first, we put ourselves in the place of God. When playing video games or making good grades is more important to us than God, those things become false gods.

Anything we love and honor more than God is an idol. Even though we may not bow down to these things or sing songs to them, God knows our hearts. Because we sin, we deserve to be punished. But Jesus paid for our sin on the cross and stands for us before God. When we trust in Jesus, God forgives our sins.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute pencils and journal pages.

SAY • Everyone sins against God, and He would be right to punish us. The Bible says we deserve to die for our sin, but God loves us and He sent His Son, Jesus, to be our Mediator. The Father punished His Son in our place. Let's pray and thank God for sending Jesus to be our Mediator.

Lead kids in a short prayer. Thank God for sending His Son, Jesus, and praise Him for forgiving our sin. Invite kids to write in their journal pages about how this good news makes them feel.

As time allows, lead kids to complete "Closer Look" on the activity page to find the main point: **God punished His people for worshiping a golden calf.**

- pencils
- Journal Page
- "A Closer Look" activity page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week's *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.