

LESSON 36

The Golden Calf

EXODUS 29; 32:1–35



BIBLE TRUTH

WHERE SIN IS GREAT, GOD'S GRACE IS GREATER

LESSON SNAPSHOT

1. **OPENING REVIEW** **5 MIN**
Use last week’s lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.
2. **BIBLE STORY** **10 MIN**
Read Exodus 32:1–24 from the Scriptures or read story 36, “The Golden Calf,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.
3. **OBJECT LESSON 1** **10 MIN**
Intercession
SUPPLIES:
✓ whiteboard and dry-erase marker
4. **TEACHING/DISCUSSION** **10 MIN**
5. **OBJECT LESSON 2** **10 MIN**
Idol in My Heart
SUPPLIES:
✓ miniature toy car
✓ bag of candy-coated chocolates
✓ package of sports cards
✓ five-dollar bill
✓ can of popular soda
✓ whiteboard and dry-erase marker
6. **SWORD BIBLE MEMORY** **5 MIN**
7. **ACTIVITY TIME** **10 MIN**
Coloring Activity
SUPPLIES:
✓ coloring page 36—one copy for each child
8. **CLOSING PRAYER** **5 MIN**
9. **BONUS OBJECT LESSON** **10 MIN**
Out Came the Golden Calf
SUPPLIES:
✓ large candle and matches
✓ golden costume jewelry

TOTAL 75 MIN

PREPARING TO TEACH

TEACHING POINTS

Even the priests needed to be cleansed of their sin—By this time in the story, Aaron and his sons had been chosen to serve as priests before the Lord. Aaron had been by Moses’ side all through the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. The Lord had spoken through Aaron to Pharaoh. God had even called Aaron up on the holy mountain.

But Aaron and his sons were still sinners. If they were going to serve as priests in the presence of God, their sin would need to be atoned for. (To atone means to make up the difference when there has been an injury or an offense.) The bloody ceremony that we read about in today’s passage shows how serious sin is. By this ceremony, Aaron and his sons were made priests of God, and their sins were atoned for.

Israel turned from God to idols—God had already warned the Israelites three times not to make an idol and worship it. After Moses gave these and other instructions to the Israelites, they promised to obey. “All the people answered with one voice and said, ‘All the words that the Lord has spoken we will do’ ” [Exodus 24:3]. But here, after Moses had been away for awhile, they began to worship a golden calf. And Aaron made it for them!

God had been speaking to Moses on the mountain for many days. The people thought he was not coming back, so they turned away from God and told Aaron to make them idols of gold, which he did. Then they threw a party and offered sacrifices to the golden calf. But God knew exactly what was going on and described it all to Moses.

God declared he would kill all the Israelites and transfer the promise of Abraham completely to Moses. But Moses, acting as a mediator for the people, appealed to God. As a result, God did not completely destroy Israel.

Moses interceded on behalf of the people and God relented—God threatened to destroy the Israelites and start over again with Moses and his descendants. But Moses begged God not to do this. His appeal was based on God’s promise to make Abraham, Isaac, and Israel (Jacob) into a great nation. Moses also did not want the people of Egypt to think that God brought them out into the desert only to kill them. Moses wanted the people of Israel to be a testimony to other nations to God’s greatness. God agreed not to bring upon the Israelites the disaster he had threatened.

After Moses came down from the mountain and saw the horrible sin of the Israelites, he said, “I will go up to the Lord; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin” (Exodus 32:30). Moses offered his life in their place.

Moses is a wonderful picture of Jesus who even now is our mediator standing between us and God pleading for our good (Romans 8:34). Jesus offered his life in exchange for ours and like Moses was willing to suffer our punishment. Moses’ life could never have purchased the forgiveness of someone else because Moses was a sinner. Nevertheless, we see a vivid picture of Christ in the life of Moses.

WHERE IS JESUS?

How does today’s Bible story fit into God’s greater plan of redemption?

Read Hebrews 8:5–13.

Though there are many significant differences between Moses (he was a sinner) and Jesus (he was sinless), there are similarities as well. Moses and Jesus were both mediators between God and man. Just as Moses pleaded with God not to destroy the Israelites when they worshiped the golden calf, Jesus asked his father to have mercy on those who crucified him (Luke 23:34).

THE LESSON

OPENING REVIEW 5 MIN

Use last week’s lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read Exodus 32:1–24 from the Scriptures or read story 36, “The Golden Calf,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

OBJECT LESSON 1 10 MIN

Intercession

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase marker

The object of this exercise is to help the children understand the word intercession—praying on behalf of another.

Ask the children to share prayer requests for anyone they know who is ill or in need. Come up with a list of several prayer requests. Write them on the whiteboard and then take turns interceding for the people on the board. Use the words intercede and intercession instead of prayer so the children will get used to the meaning of the word.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- **What does it mean to intercede for someone?**
(It simply means to go to God on their behalf and ask God for help.)
- **What did Moses intercede for on behalf of the people of Israel?**
(Moses prayed to God that God would not destroy Israel for their sin.)
- **For what does Jesus intercede for us?**
(Jesus died on the cross for our sins and ever lives to intercede for us, declaring to God that our sins are covered by his sacrifice.)

TEACHING/DISCUSSION 10 MIN

Using the teaching points, teach through the lesson for today.

OBJECT LESSON 2 10 MIN

Idol in My Heart

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ miniature toy car
- ✓ bag of candy-coated chocolates
- ✓ package of sports cards
- ✓ five-dollar bill
- ✓ can of popular soda
- ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase marker

Hold up the items before the class and ask the following questions for each item: How many of you love toys? candy? sports? money? soda? Write the tally on the board.

Then ask how many of them have sinned against God for their love of these things. They might be hesitant to answer yes because they may not understand. Explain to them that if they have ever fought over a toy or whined for more candy or soda or been mad because their team lost, then they are guilty of sinning for their love of these things.

Ask them, “Do you know what to call something that we love so much that we sin against God on account of it?” The answer is an idol. Help them understand that an idol is anything we love in place of God.

The Bible tells us, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (Deuteronomy 6:5).

Anything that steals that love for God is an idol.

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITY TIME 10 MIN

Coloring Activity

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ coloring page 36—one copy for each child

While the children are coloring, engage them by asking the following questions:

- What are the people doing around the statue of the golden calf?
(They are singing, dancing, and worshiping the idol.)
- Why did Moses get angry when he saw the people singing and dancing and worshiping around this statue?
(Moses was angry that the people had turned from the Lord.)

CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

Pick several children to pray prayers based on the day’s scripture passages.

BONUS OBJECT LESSON **10 MIN**

Out Came the Golden Calf

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ large candle and matches
- ✓ golden costume jewelry

Light the candle and set it on a table. Retell the story of the golden calf. Then say to the children, “There is one part of the story that has always puzzled me.” Read Exodus 32:21–24.

Continue by saying, “Aaron told Moses that he simply collected their jewelry, threw it into a fire and out popped the golden calf.”

Tell the class that you brought in some jewelry because you want to see if you can make a golden calf pop out of a fire. Gather a handful of the jewelry and throw it into the candle and wait expecting to see a calf jump out.

Ask the children what went wrong. The clear answer is that Aaron lied. The calf didn’t just pop out of the fire. Read Exodus 32:1–8. It clearly reports that Aaron melted down the gold and then fashioned a golden calf from it. Ask the children why they think Aaron lied to Moses. Then talk about why making an idol is such a bad thing—it only leads to more sin.

