

LESSON 36

# The Golden Calf

EXODUS 29; 32:1–35



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**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**  
Who’s Got the Gum?  
**SUPPLIES:**  
✓ a pack of strong peppermint gum
- 6. SWORD BIBLE MEMORY . . . . . 5 MIN**
- 7. ACTIVITY TIME . . . . . 15 MIN**  
Golden Calf  
**SUPPLIES:**  
✓ yellow play dough
- 8. CLOSING PRAYER . . . . . 5 MIN**
- 9. BONUS OBJECT LESSON . . . . . 10 MIN**  
Compare the Stories

**TOTAL 80 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.

## A LITTLE BIT MORE

### *Atonement*

The word *atonement* is sometimes used differently in the Old Testament and the New Testament. In Romans 5:11, for example, atonement is translated reconciliation—the bringing of two parties at odds back together.

In the Old Testament, atonement often carries with it the idea of propitiation—a sacrifice to compensate and satisfy the wrath of God. Here in our passage, Moses offers his life up to satisfy the wrath of God so that the people of Israel might be free. Yet even Moses’ life was not enough to satisfy the wrath of God. Only the sacrifice of the pure life of Jesus Christ makes final atonement with a holy God. See 1 John 2:2, for an occurrence of the word propitiation in the New Testament.

## 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**

**Who's Got the Gum?**

**SUPPLIES:**

- ✓ a pack of strong peppermint gum

The object of this lesson is to help the children see that God knows everything, even our secret sin.

Explain to the children that you are going to secretly give a piece of gum to several students. Through the course of the morning everyone else should try to guess who has the gum. The students who receive the gum should put it in their mouth and then try to keep from being found out.

Have all the children close their eyes. Pass out the gum, and once everyone who receives a piece has placed it in their mouth, resume the lesson.

The class will immediately be looking to figure out who has the gum. While they are guessing, talk to them about the story of the golden calf and how the people sinned against God. Read aloud Exodus 32:7–10.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- **With Moses away, do you think the people thought they could do what they wanted without being caught?**  
*(In this passage, they do not seem concerned about their behavior.)*
- **How did God know what they were doing when he was up on the mountain with Moses?**  
*(God is everywhere and knows all things. Nothing is hidden from God.)*
- **Can you think of a time when you were tempted to disobey when your mom and dad were not around?**  
*(Draw out the kids with a few illustrations. Perhaps they were tempted to steal a cookie or more likely to hit their brother or sister when mom or dad was not around.)*

- What do we learn from this passage about our sin?

*(God sees all of our sins. We cannot hide our sins from God.)*

Connect the message of the lesson above with the hidden gum chewing. We can try to hide our sin, like hiding the gum, but just as it was easy to identify the gum chewers because of the pungent gum smell, so we can be sure that our sin will be found out. God sees all our sin.

**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 . . . . . 15 MIN**

Golden Calf

**SUPPLIES:**

- ✓ yellow play dough

Have the children make a golden calf out of yellow play dough.

**CLOSING PRAYER . . . . . 5 MIN**

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

**BONUS OBJECT LESSON . . . . . 10 MIN**

Compare the Stories

Have the children read Exodus 32:21–24. Ask them to describe what they read to you. Then have someone in the class read Exodus 32:1–8. Ask the children the following questions:

- What do we learn from comparing these two stories?  
*(We learn that Aaron lied to Moses about where the calf came from.)*
- Who actually made the golden calf?  
*(Aaron made the golden calf.)*

■ Why was what Aaron did so bad?

*(God told the Israelites not to make an idol in the form of anything. Aaron disobeyed God's command and made the golden calf. He then told the people to worship the idol saying that it was the golden calf who lead them out of Egypt not the true God.)*

■ Why do you think Aaron made the golden calf?

*(The people didn't want a God that they couldn't see; a God who had to be trusted by faith. They wanted a god they could see and control.)*