

THE GOLDEN CALF

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: EXODUS 32:1-32



Where sin is great God's grace is greater.

The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

The people of Israel forgot their vow and sinned against the Lord – In Exodus 20:23, God told Moses to remind the people, “You shall not make gods of silver to be with me, nor shall you make for yourselves gods of gold.” After Moses gave these and other instructions to the Israelites, they promised to obey. Exodus 24:3 records their response: “All the people answered with one voice and said, ‘All the words that the Lord has spoken we will do.’” God was speaking to Moses on the mountain for many days and the people didn’t know what happened to Moses, if he was alive or dead. Figuring that Moses was gone, they turned their back on God and demanded that Aaron make them gods of gold. Not only did they make a golden calf, but they threw a party and began to celebrate and offer sacrifices to the calf. In this way, they corrupted themselves. Aaron, who was to be consecrated a priest of the true God, led the way into sin.

God saw the sin of Israel and spoke judgment – The people of Israel did not realize that God was completely aware of their sin. He described in detail to Moses the sin of the people. God proclaimed judgment on them and declared that He would wipe them out and save Moses to inherit the promise (see Exodus 32:10).

Moses interceded on behalf of the people and God relented – Moses implored the Lord not to judge the people, and reminded God of His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Israel (Jacob). He reminded God that He promised to multiply them and make them a great nation. In response to Moses’ appeal, the Lord relented.

Moses is a wonderful picture of Jesus, who mediates on our behalf to God. Even now Christ continues to intercede for us, see Romans 8:34. As Moses spoke, God was reminded of His plan of redemption. When Moses said, “I will go up to the Lord; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin” (Exodus 32:30), we see another picture of Christ. Moses offered his life in their place, to be blotted out for the sake of the people. God refused. Moses’ life was insufficient to atone for the sins of the people. Nevertheless, we see a foreshadowing of Christ in the life of Moses that reminded God of the future sacrifice of His Son.

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WHERE IS JESUS?

Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.

Jesus is a superior mediator of a New Covenant. While Moses, Israel's mediator, met with God, the people grew impatient, rejecting Moses. Similarly, Jesus was rejected by His people and put to death on a cross. The religious leaders rejected God's mediator, Moses, and also rejected God's Son, Jesus. In this way, Moses foreshadowed Christ.

He was in the assembly in the desert, with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers; and he received living words to pass on to us. (Acts 7:38)

But our fathers refused to obey him. Instead, they rejected him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt. They told Aaron, 'Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who led us out of Egypt - we don't know what has happened to him!' That was the time they made an idol in the form of a calf. They brought sacrifices to it and held a celebration in honor of what their hands had made. (Acts 7:39-41)

...then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. He is "the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone." Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:10-12)



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ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.

Bible Passage: Isaiah 53:12

Connecting the passage to Christ:

Isaiah 53:12 is one of the clearest prophetic passages which speak of Jesus. In this verse we see four characteristics of Jesus: (1) Jesus poured out His soul to death, (2) he was numbered with the transgressors (sinners), (3) he bore the sins of many, and (4) he makes intercession for the transgressors. Jesus gave up His life, was crucified among thieves. He took our sins upon Himself and even now is at the right hand of the Father, interceding on our behalf as our eternal mediator.

Questions for reflection:

- What in this passage points to Christ? ((1) Jesus poured out His soul to death, (2) was numbered with the transgressors (sinners), (3) bore the sins of many, and (4) makes intercession for the transgressors.)
- What does the Bible mean when it says He bore the sins of many? (Jesus had no sin. When it says that He bore our sins, it means that He carried our sins to His death on the cross. Jesus received the full consequence/judgment that our sins deserved.)

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY

BE A DOER OF THE WORD

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.



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ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?

INTERCESSION

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 that is ill or in need. Come up with a list of several prayer requests. Write them on the white board then take turns interceding for the people on the board. Use the word 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.)



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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.

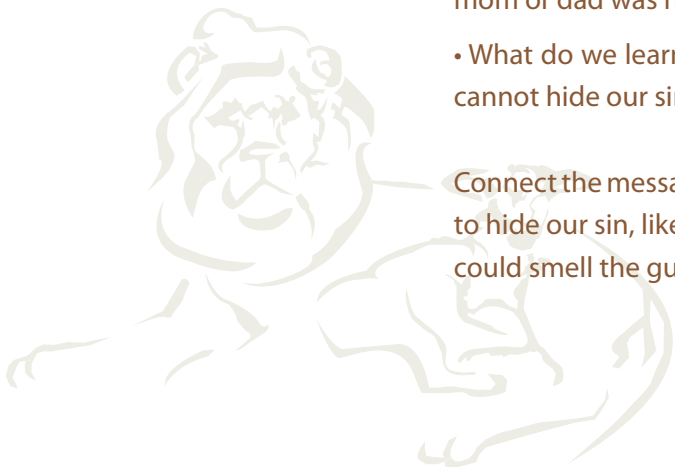
Have all the children close their eyes. (If you see a child cheat, have a helper take them to the wall and have them face the wall until the distribution of the gum is over). Pass out the gum, and once everyone who receives a piece has placed it in their mouth, resume the lesson.

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 to them 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 we will surely be found out, as the children could smell the gum and see the children chewing. God sees all our sin.



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IDOL IN MY HEART

Supplies

- Match Box™ car
- bag of M&M™ candies
- package of sports cards
- five dollar bill
- can of popular soda

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 them 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 were mad because their team lost, that 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?" Of course, the answer is that it is an idol. Help them understand that an idol is anything we love in place of God.

The Bible tells us that we should love the Lord with all our heart and all our soul and all our strength and all our mind. (Deuteronomy 6:5 and Matthew 22:37)

Anything that steals that love for God is an idol.

PRAYER

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

IN CLASS PROJECT

The first and second grade children can use the preschool coloring sheet and questions. Have the older children make a golden calf out of yellow play dough.



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FOR OLDER GRADES

Since we do not normally make idols like the Israelites did when they made a golden calf, the children may think that we are free of idols, when in fact we worship other things in place of God every day. Explain to the children what an idol is. Tell them that we can have an idol in our heart and make a list on the board of all the different idols in our lives.

Idol – Anything we want more than God. An idol will cause us to disobey the Lord's commands. Examples:

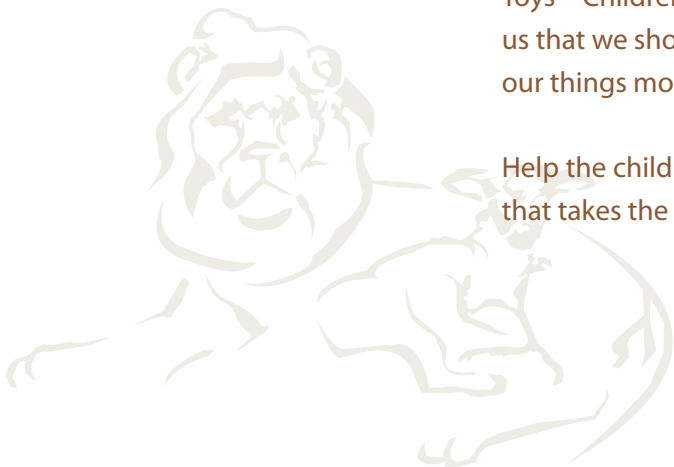
Candy – Children can often get angry if they don't get candy. The Bible tells us to do everything without complaining, but if a child doesn't get an equal share of candy they might disobey God's law and follow their love for candy over their love for the Lord.

Sports – Children can spend more time talking about a sports player or team than God. Even though Psalm 1 tells us we should meditate day and night on the Word of God, many people think day and night about a sports team. If they don't get to watch a game they might get angry.

Control – Children can demand control. If their parents ask them to go to bed at a certain time, they might get angry. Even though the Bible tells us to honor our father and mother, we can follow our craving for control and insist that we know better.

Toys – Children can guard their toys and not share. Even though the Bible tells us that we should consider others more important than ourselves, we can love our things more than God and refuse to give them up.

Help the children see that an idol is not just a golden calf, but can be anything that takes the place of God in our lives.



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A LITTLE BIT MORE

Atonement – The word atonement is sometimes used a bit differently in the Old Testament than in the New Testament. In the New Testament we see Paul use the term in Romans 5:11 where it substitutes for the Greek word that means reconciliation, the bringing of two parties at odds back together.

In the Old Testament, it often carries more the meaning 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, 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 a pure life in Jesus Christ makes final atonement with a holy God. In 1 John 2:2, we see a similar use of the word in the New Testament.

