



MOSAIC Gospel Project

Volume 2, Unit 6, Lesson 1: The Golden Calf

Bible Passage: Exodus 32, 34

Personal Preparation

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 gods for us 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. When 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 individuals 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.

As you prepare to teach the lesson, confess to God the ways that you have chosen to worship idols instead of him. Praise him for his mercy. Thank him for sending Jesus to rescue us from the punishment we deserve for our sin. Pray that the individuals you teach would see their own sinfulness and rejoice in God's grace and mercy towards them.

Memory Verse

Start the lesson by introducing the new memory verse.

Exodus 15:2

"The Lord is my strength and my song; he has given me victory. This is my God, and I will praise him—my father's God, and I will exalt him!"

Points of Emphasis

1. God disciplined his people for worshiping a golden calf.
2. Worship is celebrating the greatness of God.

Activity #1

Lead the group to begin working on the activity sheet. Feel free to let them continue as you teach the lesson.

Video

God rescued his people from Egypt through the plagues, the Passover, and the parting of the Red Sea. In the wilderness, God gave his people food and water, but he also gave them the Law to guide them. God wanted them to love him and other people; the Ten Commandments taught them what love should look like. This week, we'll see how well the people obeyed God's law. Our story is "The Golden Calf."

Play the video for today's lesson titled "The Golden Calf."

Bible Lesson

Oh no! This story is a sad one. God's people got tired of waiting for Moses to bring back God's words to them. While Moses was gone, the people lost sight of what was important. They decided to take matters into their own hands instead of trusting God's plan. As we've seen in the past, that always leads to sinful choices.

When Moses arrived back at the camp, he found the people dancing and singing praises to a statue! The golden calf was nothing but a big chunk of shiny metal. It had no power, it wasn't alive, and it did not save them. But they were worshiping it as though it had done all the wonderful things God did!

God disciplined his people for worshiping a golden calf. To fully understand why it is sinful to worship things besides God, we need to understand what worship is supposed to be. What is worship? Do any of you have an idea what the answer might be? [Allow responses.] Those are some good ideas. Worship is celebrating the greatness of God. Only God is everlasting, perfect, loving, and all-powerful. Only God deserves to be worshiped.

When we think something other than God is as great or greater than God, we are completely wrong. Our worship is foolish unless it is directed at God. God deserves our worship because he created us, loves us, and sent Jesus to save us from sin.

Activity #2

Guide the group to finish working on the activity sheet. Review the memory verse with the group. Encourage the individuals to write the memory verse using the Velcro pictures.

Christ Connection

A mediator is someone who helps two people or groups of people communicate and come to an agreement. 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.

Review Questions

(Optional: Play the Questions from Kids (QFK) video as a part of the discussion on the golden calf. Today's episode asks how we can know if something or someone is an idol.)

Group A
Early Learner

Encourage the individuals to point to the pictures provided or to draw in order to answer these questions.

1. **Point to who was on the mountain talking to God for 40 days.** Moses
2. **Point to who got impatient and decided to make an idol to worship.** The Israelites
3. **Point to what the people made.** Golden calf
4. **Point to who asked God to have mercy on the Israelites.** Moses
5. **Point to who disciplined the Israelites and showed them mercy.** God

Group B

- 1. Why did the people decide to worship an idol?** Moses took a long time on the mountain, and the people assumed he was not coming back.
- 2. Why did God choose to show the people mercy?** Moses remembered God's promise to Abraham and asked God to be merciful.
- 3. Did God leave the Israelite's sin unpunished?** No, He promised to hold them accountable.
- 4. How can God be both just and merciful?** God was just to punish the people for their sin, but merciful because he chose not to destroy all of them. Jesus is the perfect example of God's justice and mercy. Jesus took the punishment for sin so that we could enjoy God's mercy and forgiveness.
- 5. Why does God command us to worship him alone?** God is the only One who deserves worship. He created everything and has authority over everything. Nothing he created is as good or powerful as him, so worshiping anything else is a waste of time and energy.
- 6. What are some things we worship besides God? How do we worship those things?** People pursue things like comfort, control, acceptance, or power. People may worship money, celebrities, or knowledge. If we place anything in our lives in a place above God, we are worshiping that thing as an idol.

Group C

- 1. Being disciplined is never fun. But why is it necessary and even helpful?** Discipline often helps us learn from our mistakes. It also helps us see the severity of our wrongdoing—the greater the offense, the greater the discipline.
- 2. How does God's discipline show that he loves us?** God disciplines us because he loves us. If he didn't love us, he wouldn't care what we did. He wants us to follow his rules because he knows what's best for us.

- 3. What would happen if we were never disciplined?** Without discipline, everyone would do their own thing. There would be no order and no way to hold people accountable for their actions.

Group D

Advanced Learner

- 1. What does this story teach us about God?** Only God deserves our worship. Worship is celebrating the greatness of God. The Israelites took their eyes off the greatness of God and made a golden idol instead. God is the One who loved them, rescued them, and had a plan for them.
- 2. What happened after the Israelites worshiped an idol?** God discipline his people for worshiping a golden calf. He got their attention fast so they would put their focus—their worship—back where it belongs: on him.
- 3. How can you know if something or someone is an idol?**
- 4. What types of things or people might you be tempted to worship?**

Prayer

Father, we know that we often lose sight of your awesome goodness and power. We worship silly things that will not last. Only you last forever and only you are worthy of worship. Help us remember you and praise you alone. Amen.

