



LESSON 3

THE GOLDEN CALF

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: We Can Worship God

SCRIPTURE: Exodus 32

GOD'S BIG STORY: While Moses listens to God on the mountain, the Israelites become restless and fashion a golden calf and worship it—yet God is faithful and shows only He is worthy of worship.

WORD OF WONDER: God is faithful. That's who He is. —from 2 Timothy 2:13

- Play Stations:
 - Jewelry Bin
 - Creative Worship
 - The Golden Calf Coloring Sheet
- Curiosity Activity: My Number One
- Word of Wonder: From 2 Timothy 2:13
- Declaring God's Wonder
- Prayer of Invitation
- Worship: House of the Lord, All of Me
- God's Big Story
- Connecting the Wonder Truth
- Prayer and Blessing
- Circle Time: Catch the Beat
- Craft: Mosaic Mountain
- Closing Game: Hidden Jewels





LESSON 3 FOR LEADERS

INVITATION

We invite you to pause, listen, and shift your gaze toward the Father ...

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: We Can Worship God

SCRIPTURE: Exodus 32

WORD OF WONDER: From 2 Timothy 2:13

In every human mind, there is a part that functions like a magnifying glass, bringing whatever we choose into focus and making it appear larger. Did you know God made your mind capable of examining things deeply from every angle? We can place that imaginary magnifying glass over anything!

Let's aim our focus at Exodus 32 now, and as we read, invite the Holy Spirit to highlight whatever is on God's heart for you today. Where does your imagination come alive in this story? Can you see the sights and hear the people in the wilderness? Can you envision their jewelry melting in the fire? What sounds floated up the mountain to Moses as the Israelites disobeyed God? Did he think they were having fun?

We may not carve golden calves anymore, but we all encounter distractions that can seem larger than life and threaten to take our attention from Jesus. What has been attempting to distract you lately?

When this happens, it's natural to be pulled off course for a moment or two, but then what? What will you do with your powerful mind? Let's choose to return our gaze to the face of Jesus. Only God is worthy of worship, and when we place the magnifying glass in our minds upon Him, we will find more goodness, more wisdom, and more to admire than we could ever imagine.

—Nancy Wood Clark

Children's Pastor

Contributor to Wonder Ink

DID YOU KNOW?

FOUNDATION BUILDING BLOCKS

WHO?

The Israelites—God’s people whom He rescued from slavery in Egypt. God kept all His promises, and the people put their trust in Him and became bonded to Him through the covenant of the law at Mount Sinai.

WHAT?

The covenant at Mount Sinai was similar to a wedding between God and His people. The Israelites immediately broke their vows and cheated on the God who had been faithful to them. They worshiped another god and created a graven image—breaking one of the Ten Commandments.

WHERE?

God led the Israelites out of Egypt and into the desert. They went to the foot of Mount Sinai, which is the same place Moses met God at the burning bush years before. Mount Sinai is also called Mount Horeb in the Bible.

WHEN?

It had been three months since the Israelites left Egypt. As a consequence of their sin, 3,000 people died (Exodus 32:27–28). By the time of Jesus, the biblical holiday of Pentecost was associated with the giving of the law at Mount Sinai.

CONNECTING TO GOD’S BIG STORY:

The Israelites expected their God to be like other gods. God forbade them from making a created image because the exact image of God would arrive in the person of Jesus. When people look at Jesus, they see the God worthy of worship.



Curiosity

Belief

Faith

Identity

LESSON 3 EARLY CHILDHOOD

Spark curiosity and get kids thinking about the wonder of God.

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: We Can Worship God

SCRIPTURE: Exodus 32

WORD OF WONDER: From 2 Timothy 2:13

Play Stations

SUPPLIES: various shiny objects (such as beads, play jewelry, gems, or jewels), bin, colorful scarves, coloring utensils, paper, microphone (optional)

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: [The Golden Calf Coloring Sheet \(1 per kid\)](#)

Greet the kids warmly and briefly explain the play stations to them. Invite them to play at any of the stations.

Welcome to church! While we're getting ready to start, you can play at any of these stations to help you get ready for our lesson today. Do you have any ideas about what we'll be learning today?

Play Station: Jewelry Bin

Set up: Fill a bin with shiny objects or toy jewelry so that there is an assortment of beads, jewels, and gems.

Play: Let kids explore the items in the bin. Ask kids if they can spot specific items as you describe their color or shape.

Play Station: Creative Worship

Set up: Set out a variety of items kids can use to worship God. Items can include colorful scarves (for dancing), coloring utensils, and paper (for drawing), or a microphone (for singing).

Play: Let the kids explore the items. Ask them to identify the item and how it is typically used. Encourage them to think of a way they can worship God with the selected item. Be ready to define worship for younger kids. Tell them worshipping God is a way we show God we love Him and tell Him that He is the best!

Play Station: The Golden Calf Coloring Sheet

Set up: Ahead of time, print one coloring sheet per kid and set out coloring utensils.

Play: Let the kids color. The kids can also turn the sheet over and draw a picture of something they really love.

Curiosity Activity: My Number One

SUPPLIES: colored paper (1 sheet of each color: yellow, red, green, pink, blue, orange, purple)

Set out one sheet of paper in each color: yellow, red, green, pink, blue, orange, and purple.

Hold up one finger and ask: **How many fingers am I holding up?** Allow kids to respond. **I'm holding up one finger, and we're going to talk about the number one. It's the first number we say when we're counting. I'm going to show you a color, and you can think of your favorite thing that is that color. I'll go first!**

Hold up the first paper (yellow). Share your favorite thing that is yellow (the sun, lemonade, etc.). Once kids understand the activity, proceed through every color of paper. Pause at each color and allow kids to share their favorite item.

Did you know God is very special? He is my favorite, and I can show Him that by worshiping Him. Do you know what the word worship means? Allow kids to respond. **Worship means showing that something or someone is the most important to us. The Bible tells us that we should only worship God because He is number one. He's the most important. In today's part of God's big story, we're going to learn about some people who forgot about that. We're learning today that we can worship God!**

Word of Wonder

SUPPLIES: Bible

WORD OF WONDER

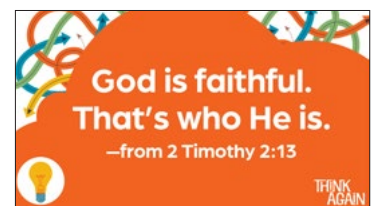
God is faithful. That's who He is.

—from 2 Timothy 2:13

Our Word of Wonder for the Think Again series is from 2 Timothy 2:13.

Let's practice saying the Word of Wonder together. Open a Bible to 2 Timothy 2:13 and practice the verse with the kids.

Gather the kids in a circle. Review the Word of Wonder with kids by saying it a couple of times, encouraging kids to say it with you.



Our Word of Wonder for this series tells us that God is faithful. In our story today, we saw that God was faithful to His people, even when they were wrong and didn't worship Him. We can learn from this story and make God our number one. We can worship Him and make Him the most important. And He will always be faithful because that's who He is! Let's practice the verse so we can always remember it.

Encourage the kids to do the motions and say the verse with you.

- **GOD**—Point up.
- **IS FAITHFUL**.—Give two thumbs-up (one on each word).
- **THAT'S WHO**—Put your arms out in front of you, palms up (one on each word).

- **HE IS.**—Point up (once on each word).
- **FROM 2 TIMOTHY 2:13**—Hold your hands open in front of you, as if holding a book.

Gather the kids and ask them to sit in a circle. Invite kids to play a game of popcorn by going around the circle and encouraging each kid to say the next word of the verse while popping up. Continue until everyone has had a turn. The group can say the verse a few times.

Make It Inclusive: If there are kids in your group who are unable to pop up, invite kids to raise their hands instead.

Gather kids to discuss these questions:

- **How do you feel knowing God is always with you, even when you make bad choices?**
- **This verse tells us God is faithful, which means He always keeps His promises and stays with us. Because He is faithful, we can trust Him and worship Him. How can you worship God this week?**

VIEW THE GOD'S BIG STORY VIDEO
Watch the God's Big Story Video as
kids eat their snacks



Declaring God's Wonder

Show the Early Childhood Declaration [Video](#) or Slide and encourage the kids to say the statements and do the motions with you.

Thank You, God, that You made me! (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Make prayer hands, then point up and then to yourself.

And I am Your kid! (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Put your hands on your hips.

Jesus loves me so much. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Spread your arms out wide to your side one at a time, then pull them in for a hug around your chest.

His love for me is big. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Hold your arms up high and wide above your head.

The Holy Spirit leads me, (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Bring your arms down from above, making a path in front of you.

And I can follow You. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

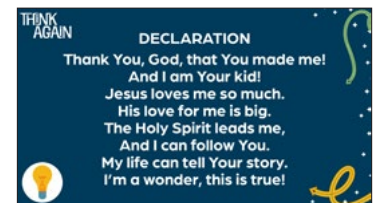
March in place like you're following the leader.

My life can tell Your story. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Hold your hands in front of you like an open book.

I'm a wonder; this is true. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Put your hands up, shake your fingers, and celebrate ("praise hands").



Prayer of Invitation

Before entering into God's big story, lead kids in a prayer of invitation. Use the prayer here or your own words: **God, thank You for being with us today. You are great, powerful, and awesome. There is no one else like You. We worship You because of who You are. Help us hear from You today. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

Worship

Today we'll learn that we can worship and praise God because He is amazing, and He's the only one who deserves our worship. Let's start by praising God!

Play House of the Lord, All of Me and encourage the kids to sing and dance as they praise God.

God's Big Story

SUPPLIES: Bible

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: Bible Story Picture (optional)

Bible Time Rhyme

Say the Bible time rhyme (with motions) each week before the Bible story to remind kids that what they're about to hear is part of God's big story.

I open my Bible, and what do I see? (*Hold your hands together, then open your palms, as if opening a book.*)

God's big story, waiting for me! (*Point to yourself.*)

Let's hear part of God's big story, which comes from the book of Exodus in the Old Testament in the Bible.

Read the God's Big Story Script provided.

GOD'S BIG STORY SCRIPT

SUPPLIES: play dough (1 lump per kid)

Give each kid a small lump of play dough. **During our story today, you can all use play dough to create parts of the story as I tell it. I'll pause and tell you what to make with your dough. It doesn't have to be perfect! Let's try our best!**

A long time ago, God chose a man named Abraham. Invite the kids to create a person with their play dough. **God promised to bless the whole world through Abraham's family. Abraham's family grew and became God's special people. They were called the Israelites. Sometimes they sinned and made wrong choices. But God still loved the Israelites.** Invite the kids to create a heart with their play dough. **He had a plan for them.**

The Israelites became slaves in Egypt. The Egyptians made God's people work hard and treated them badly. Invite the kids to create a sad face with their play dough. **But God still loved the Israelites and had a plan for them. God rescued them and set them free!** Invite the kids to create a happy face with their play dough. **God chose a man named Moses to lead the Israelites. God told the people to only worship God. God showed His people amazing things. He split the waters of the sea in half.** Invite the kids to create a sea with their play dough, then divide it in half. **The people walked through on dry land. God gave the people food when they were hungry. The people saw that God was powerful. They said, "Yes, God! We want to only worship You!"**

After the people were free, Moses climbed up a big mountain to meet with God. Invite the kids to create a mountain with their play dough. **The big mountain was called Mount Sinai. Moses stayed on top of the mountain for 40 days. He listened to God. God gave Moses rules and instructions for His people.**

While Moses was up on the mountain, the people got tired of waiting for him to come down. The Israelites said to Moses' brother, Aaron, "Make us something to worship!" Aaron should have told them no, but he didn't. Aaron took their gold jewelry and melted it. Then he made it into a shiny golden calf, a baby cow. Invite the kids to create the letter "c" with their play dough. **The people danced, sang, and worshiped the golden calf as if it was a god. But the calf wasn't God. When people worship something that isn't God, it's called an idol. And worshiping an idol is a bad choice.** Invite the kids to create a sad face with their play dough.

The people forgot their promise to only worship God. It made God very angry. God is the only true God. He is the only one who deserves worship.

Moses came down the mountain and saw what the people were doing. Moses was angry too. The people disobeyed God. They sinned. But Moses asked God to forgive them. Even though the Israelites sinned, God still loved them and had a plan for them. He did not leave them.

We do wrong things and sin sometimes too. And God forgives us. God loves us and is with us. Invite the kids to create a heart with their play dough. **God keeps all His promises, and we can trust Him. Because of this, we can worship God!**

Connecting the Wonder Truth

Ask the following question to help kids connect the Wonder Truth to God's big story:

Our Wonder Truth today is **WE CAN WORSHIP GOD. Where did you see our Wonder Truth happen in the story?** Allow kids to answer freely.

We see in today's story that the Israelites expected the one true God to be like other people's pretend gods. But there's no one like the real God. God didn't want His people making an image or statue of a pretend god. He knew that one day the real image of God would come in Jesus. When people look at Jesus, they see the one true God. He is the only one who deserves worship. We can worship God.

Prayer and Blessing

After the kids finish their activity, pray with them and thank God for His love and faithfulness.

As we pray, give yourself a hug when I say, "loving" or "love" and lift your hands above your head when I say, "worship." Let's pray and talk to God.

God, thank You for loving (give yourself a hug) and helping us. We're here to worship (arms above your head) You and only You. We love (give yourself a hug) You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Encourage the kids to hold their hands out in front of them, with palms up, as if their hands are open to receive something. Tell them to listen and receive the blessing as you speak it over them.

Blessing: May you know that God is always faithful. He loves you more than anything, and He deserves our worship. May you know God and love Him more and more as you worship only Him.

Circle Time: Catch the Beat

SUPPLIES: microphone or maraca

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: upbeat songs from the [Think Again Early Childhood Spotify playlist](#)

Gather the kids into a circle. Give one kid either a microphone or maraca. **Today we're learning that we can worship God! We can worship God in many ways. One way of worshiping God is through music. Let's play music while we worship God. While the music is playing, pass the microphone (or maraca) around the circle. If the music stops while you're holding it, you get to answer a question. Talking about God is another way we can worship Him!**

Play upbeat songs from the [Think Again Early Childhood Spotify playlist](#) and encourage the kids to pass the microphone around the circle. Stop the music at various times and ask questions from the list. Encourage kids that it is OK if they don't know the answer because leaders and other kids can help! Continue playing until everyone has had a turn or the questions have been answered.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- **Who went up on a mountain to talk to God in today's story?** (Moses)
- **What did God's people ask Aaron to make for them?** (a statue or pretend god to worship; an idol; a golden calf)
- **How did God feel when He saw what His people had done?** (God was upset.)
- **What does it mean to worship God?** (to make Him the most important; to listen to Him and follow His instructions; to know that only He is really God)
- **How has God been faithful to you?**
- **How can you worship God today?**

God is always faithful and loves us no matter what. We can worship Him and show Him we love Him too. We can worship God through music, talking, dancing, creating things, or in many other ways. Let's worship Him now by talking to Him in prayer!

Invite kids to share prayer requests and praises and to pray for each other. Some kids may not be comfortable praying out loud. That's OK! Encourage them to pray silently and thank God for being faithful, for always keeping His promises and always being with us. Praise God for specific things He has done.

Craft: Mosaic Mountain

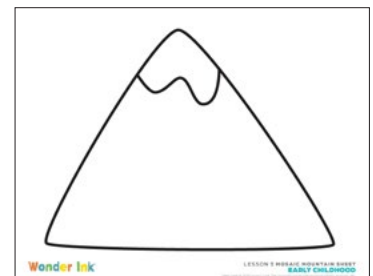
SUPPLIES: construction paper (various colors), paper bowls or plates (1 per 4–5 kids), glue sticks (1 per kid), markers, scissors (prep only, optional)

WONDER INK RESOURCES: [Mosaic Mountain Sheet \(1 per kid\)](#)

Ahead of time, cut or tear construction paper into small pieces and put the pieces into paper bowls or plates. Print a Mosaic Mountain Sheet for each kid.

In today's story, we learned that the people promised to worship only God, but they broke their promise. But even when people do something wrong, God stays faithful. Today's Wonder Truth is: **WE CAN WORSHIP GOD. We're going to make mountains to help us remember that Moses worshiped God and talked with Him on the mountain, and only God deserves our worship!**

Give each kid a glue stick and a Mosaic Mountain Sheet. Encourage kids to write their names on their sheet. Set out the bowls or plates of construction paper pieces. Have kids glue the pieces onto the mountain on their sheet to make a mosaic. After they've covered their mountain, encourage kids to use a marker to draw Moses standing at the top of the mountain.



Closing Game: Hidden Jewels

SUPPLIES: plastic jewelry

Today we learned from God's big story that we can worship God. God's people became impatient while Moses was on top of the mountain with God. They forgot about God and decided to worship something else that they could see. They created a statue, or idol, out of their jewelry.

Let's play a game to help us remember that even if we can't see if something is still there, that doesn't mean it has disappeared forever! God is always with us, even though we can't see Him.

Hide plastic jewelry in the room and challenge the kids to find it. Each time they find it, have the kids say, "We can worship God." Let kids take turns hiding the jewelry.