



LESSON 3

THE GOLDEN CALF

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: Only God Is Worthy of Worship

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: Even if we are not faithful, he remains faithful. He must be true to himself.

—2 Timothy 2:13

- Welcome Question: What do you give a lot of your time and attention to?
- Curiosity Questions
- Word of Wonder Activity
- God's Big Story
- Discussion Questions for Elementary Kids and Preteens
- Small Group Prayer Time
- LARGE GROUP
- Elementary Responding in Worship: Pause and Praise
- Preteen Responding in Worship: Stop and Behold
- Blessing Your Kids



SCAN FOR THIS
WEEK'S VIDEO!

INVITATION

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

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: Only God Is Worthy of Worship

SCRIPTURE: Exodus 32

WORD OF WONDER: 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 they 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.

LESSON 3 ELEMENTARY & PRETEEN

Small Group

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

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: Only God Is Worthy of Worship

SCRIPTURE: Exodus 32

WORD OF WONDER: 2 Timothy 2:13

Pre-Service Connection (15–20 min)

RESOURCES: whiteboard, poster paper, or butcher paper, writing utensils, board games or games

[Games & Activities Guide](#)

Small group leaders should be seated in place in their small groups 20 minutes prior to service time. Have activities ready to keep children occupied and engaged WITH you. This time is important to build relationships, welcome new kids, and keep structure in the room - you should be an active participant with them! Learn the kids names, and make sure they all know yours too!

As kids arrive ...

Warmly welcome new friends, and introduce them to your group.

Use the Welcome Question and the following "I'm Curious" questions to engage kids. Say "I'm curious.." before each question and give kids an chance to think before answering each one. After each question, consider having kids share their ideas with a neighbor before you call on one or two of them to share with the group.

Consider having a whiteboard or poster for kids to write or draw answers to any of the questions:

- Why is it easy to give your time and attention to things you love?
- Do you think God deserves our time and attention? Why or why not?



Leader Tip: To capture kids' attention, do a crazy dance move for the rest of the group to copy at random moments throughout the lesson, either after each kid shares his answer to the Welcome Question or between discussion questions.

Small Group Begins

After the Opening Activity or game, Large Group Leader will begin small group time by reading the Welcome Question aloud and inviting everyone to open their Bibles and begin.

Word of Wonder Activity

WORD OF WONDER

Even if we are not faithful, he remains faithful. He must be true to himself.

—2 Timothy 2:13 (NirV)

SUPPLIES: Bible, plastic tablecloths (1 per small group), yellow play dough (1 lump per kid), timer

Our Word of Wonder for the Think Again series is 2 Timothy 2:13. Let's review it together. Open your Bible to 2 Timothy 2:13.

As kids gather in small groups, spread out a plastic tablecloth for each small group and encourage kids to sit around it. Give each kid a lump of yellow play dough. Tell kids they have two minutes to make a golden calf out of play dough. After the play dough creations are made, tell the kids to place them on the tablecloth in front of them. Say the verse and do the following motions:

Even if we (Point to self.)

are not faithful, (Shake head as if saying, "No.")

he remains faithful. (Point up.)

He must be true to himself. (Shake head as if saying, "Yes.")

—2 Timothy 2:13 (NirV)

If we (Point to self.)

are faithless, (Shake head as if saying, "No.")

he remains faithful, (Point up.)

for he cannot disown himself. (Shake head as if saying, "Yes.")

—2 Timothy 2:13 (NIV)

Finish by saying "**Smash**"! Tell kids to smash their golden idols in front of them. Repeat the activity by having kids create things with play dough that may be idols in their lives—things they might want to put first sometimes instead of God. Repeat the verse and have kids smash their idols each time. As kids smash their creations, help them understand the significance of smashing the idols and think of idols in their lives that they may be putting before God.

Only God is worthy of our worship because He is forever faithful to us. There is nothing else on earth that begins to compare with God and His goodness and love for us. He deserves all our praise and attention.

God's Big Story

SUPPLIES: Bibles (1 per kid)

Tell kids today's story comes directly from the Bible, God's Word. Help kids find Exodus 32 in their Bibles. Explain that the book of Exodus is the second book in the Bible in the Old Testament. Encourage volunteers to assist kids in finding the passage.

The Israelites had seen God rescue them from Egypt and were camped at Mount Sinai while Moses met with God on the mountain. When Moses was gone longer than they expected, the people became impatient and made a golden calf to worship instead. They forgot that God alone had rescued and provided for them. As you read, think about what happened when the people stopped trusting God and what this story teaches us about keeping Him first in our lives.

Read Exodus 32:1–4, 7–9, 19–20, 30–34 aloud

Leader Tip: This is a difficult passage. It highlights God's holiness and shows the importance of His people being set apart for Him. Be sure to read the selected verses ahead of time and discern the best way to engage your unique group of kids with this important but hard part of God's story.

Elementary Questions

- **Who was on the mountain with God?** (Moses)
- **Why did the people make a golden calf?** (Moses took a long time talking with God, and they got restless. They didn't trust the one true God.)
- **How did Moses feel when he saw the people dancing and worshiping the golden calf?** (very angry)
- **Why would Moses be angry watching the people worship the golden calf?** (Because he cared about them, and they promised to worship God only. He knew worshiping an idol was wrong.)
- **How do you think God felt knowing the people He loved were worshiping something other than Him? Why?** (Possible answers: angry, hurt, sad, etc.)
- **What are some ways you worship God?** (praising or thanking Him, living the way He teaches us to live, listening to His instructions, singing, using talents He has given us, praying, being with other worshipers at church, reading God's Word, etc.)
- **What are some things that might get in the way of your worshiping God?** (anything we put first instead of Him—this could be sports, school, fun things we love to do, friends, family, things we want to do but know we shouldn't, etc.)

Worshiping God doesn't only happen when we sing or dance in church. We worship God in our everyday lives, like when we thank Him quietly, when we love people, or when we serve others by doing the dishes after dinner. We can worship God anytime and anywhere. Sometimes it's easy to let other things get in the way of our worship. Let's talk to God and ask Him to help us worship Him only.

Preteen Questions

- **Why did Moses go to Mount Sinai?** (God commanded Moses to come up the mountain to meet with Him, so that God could give him all of His instructions for His people. [See Exodus 24])
- **Why were the Israelites so restless?** (Moses was up on the mountain with God for a long time.)
- **What promise to God did the Israelites break?** (to not make any idols, to worship only the one true God)
- **How would you have felt if you were Moses and came down the mountain and saw what was happening? What would you have done?**
- **God remains faithful no matter what, even when we sin and disobey Him. What does that mean to you?**
- **What does worshiping God look like for you?** (Possible answers: singing, reading Scripture, prayer, being with other worshipers at church, loving other people and showing kindness to them, serving others, using the gifts God has given you.)
- **What are some things that might get in the way of our worshiping God?** (anything we put first instead of Him—this could be sports, school, fun things we love to do, friends, family, things we want to do but know we shouldn't, etc.)

What if we put aside the things that take so much of our attention and stop to listen to God? He wants to hear from us and be with us. He deserves our time, our energy, our hopes, and our relationships. He deserves our everything! Let's talk to God and ask Him to help us worship Him only.

Small Group Prayer Time

Invite kids to find a friend and talk about how they worship God and share their prayer requests. Remind kids that only God is worthy of our worship. Invite kids to pray with their friends and return to the group as you close in prayer. If a kid is not comfortable praying aloud, that is OK!

LARGE GROUP

Elementary Responding in Worship: Pause and Praise

SUPPLIES: butcher or kraft paper (1 long sheet), markers, table (optional), whiteboard (optional), dry-erase marker (optional)

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: “How Great Is Our God” from the [Think Again Elementary Spotify Playlist](#)

Set out a long sheet of butcher or kraft paper on the floor or on a table and have kids sit around it. Spread markers out so kids can all reach a variety of colors.

In God’s big story today, we learned that the people who were deeply loved by God decided to worship something else instead of Him.

They forgot how good God had been to them. I wonder what would have happened if they had just stopped. What if they paused for just a few more minutes and thought about what was happening around them? What if they had remembered what God had done for them?

What if the same could be said about us? We get restless. We make ourselves or the things we want the most important things. We forget how good God has been to us, and we give all of our time and attention to things other than God. We make other things more important to us than God.

Let’s pause and think about the things in our lives that we give more time and attention to over God. Pause with kids for a few moments as they reflect on things that they have put before God. **Now let’s pause for a few moments to praise Him, to turn our attention to God and remember how incredible and amazing He is!**

I’m going to read out a few questions that will help us think about how good and amazing God is. For each question, we’ll have a few moments to write or draw a picture of our responses all together. These words and drawings can be a way for us to worship God and remember who He is and how good He is to us.

Play “How Great Is Our God” from the [Think Again Elementary Spotify Playlist](#) softly in the background. Advance through the remaining of the Pause and Praise slides. For each slide, read the question aloud and give time for kids to write or draw their responses before moving to the next slide. Alternatively, you can use a dry-erase marker to write each question on a whiteboard, one at a time. The questions are:

- What amazes you about God?
- What do you love about God?
- How does God show His love for you?
- What is most precious to you about God?
- What makes you most excited about seeing God one day?

After everyone is finished, consider playing the song again while singing together and worshipping God, who is worthy of our worship.

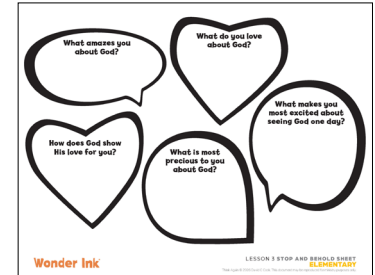
Preteen Responding in Worship: Stop and Behold

SUPPLIES: writing utensils, coloring utensils

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: [Stop and Behold Sheet \(1 per kid\)](#), “God Is Good” from the [Think Again Elementary Spotify playlist](#), Salvation Path (optional)

Before kids arrive, print a copy of the Stop and Behold Sheet for each kid. Set out writing and coloring utensils.

Display the Stop and Behold Slide. **In God’s big story today, we learned that the people who were deeply loved by God decided to worship something in place of Him. They forgot how good God had been to them. He led them out of Egypt and out of slavery. But they got restless waiting, and they made themselves and what they wanted more important than God.**



I wonder what would have happened if they had just stopped. What if they had stopped for just a few more minutes and thought about what was happening around them? What if they had remembered what God had done for them? What if they had stopped to just behold God?

When we behold something, it means we look at it intently. We gaze thoughtfully at it. Over time, if we continually behold something, we’ll probably become more and more like what we behold. What might have happened if God’s people had stopped to behold God, to return their gaze and attention to Him and remember the amazing things He had done for them? I wonder if those few minutes of thinking would have changed anything.

What if the same could be said about us? We get restless. We make ourselves or the things we want the most important things. We forget how good God has been to us, and we fix our attention and our gaze on things other than God. We make other things more important to us than God.

So how about we take these next few moments to stop and remember? Let’s stop and think about the things in our lives that get more time and attention than God. Let’s pause for a few moments to behold God, to turn our attention to Him and remember how incredible and amazing He is!

Give each kid a copy of the Stop and Behold Sheet. Encourage kids to spread out across the room. Play “God Is Good” from the [Think Again Elementary Spotify playlist](#). As kids listen to the song, encourage them to fill in the sheet by writing or drawing their responses.

After everyone is finished, consider playing the song again while singing together and worshiping God, who is worthy of our worship.

Make It Inclusive: Some kids may have difficulty reading or writing. Encourage volunteers to sit with the kids who may need help and talk about the questions together. Allow kids the option of drawing their responses instead of writing them.

Leader Tip: After talking about life priorities and worshiping God only, some kids may be thinking about how to make God the number one priority in their lives, and how to turn away from things that keep them from Him. Offer kids the opportunity to talk with a leader after the blessing, if they wish. Invite their families to join you as you talk and pray together. The Salvation Path resource also includes helpful ways to talk with kids about how to begin a personal relationship with God.