

## The Golden Calf

**BIBLE PASSAGE:** Exodus 32:1-35; 34:1-9

**MAIN POINT:** God's people worshiped a golden calf.

**KEY PASSAGE:** Hebrews 3:5-6

**BIG PICTURE QUESTION:** What is God's plan? God's plan is to rescue His people.

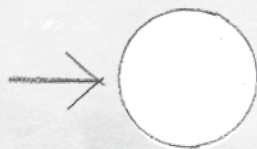
**SMALL GROUP OPENING**  
(15–20 MINUTES)

**PAGE 46**



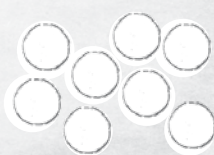
**LARGE GROUP BIBLE STUDY**  
(10–15 MINUTES)

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**SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES**  
(20–25 MINUTES)

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### Leader BIBLE STUDY

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 us a god 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. 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 preschoolers 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.

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training made simple

Additional resources for each session are available at [gospelproject.com](http://gospelproject.com). For free training and session-by-session help, visit [www.ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject](http://www.ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject).

# The BIBLE STORY

## The Golden Calf

*Exodus 32:1-35; 34:1-9*

Moses and the Israelites were in the wilderness. God had freed them from slavery in Egypt, and He helped them escape the angry pharaoh and his army. **The Israelites set up camp in front of a mountain** called Mount Sinai (SIGH nigh). **Moses went up the mountain, and God talked to him.**

God had a lot to tell Moses, and **Moses was up on the mountain for several weeks.** The Israelites at the bottom of the mountain were tired of waiting.

*Where is Moses? What is taking him so long?* they wondered.

**The people went to talk to Aaron, Moses' brother.** "We need a god to lead us because we do not know what happened to Moses," they said. So Aaron made a gold calf that they could worship.

**God saw what the people were doing, and He was angry because of their sin.** God told Moses to go down the mountain.

**Moses rushed down the mountain, carrying two stone tablets that God had written on. Moses got closer to the camp and saw the people dancing in front of the gold calf. He threw down the stone tablets, smashing them at the bottom of the mountain. Then he destroyed the gold calf.**

"What were you thinking?" Moses asked his brother.

**The next day,** Moses said, "I will go up to the Lord. Maybe I can do something so God will forgive you." Then **Moses went back up the mountain to talk to God.**

**"Please forgive these people," Moses said to God.** God

said, “When it is time to punish them, I will punish them for their sin.”

God continued to meet with Moses. He gave Moses laws and instructions. **God made two more stone tablets because Moses broke the first two. God told Moses, “The Lord cares about His people. He is good to them. But He will punish the guilty.”**

**Moses bowed down and worshiped God.** “Lord, please go with us,” he said. “Forgive our sin, and accept us as Your people.”

*Christ Connection: God’s people disobeyed God, and Moses asked God to forgive them. Moses talked to God for the people. When we sin, Jesus talks to God for us. Jesus never sinned. God forgives those who trust in Jesus.*



**WANT TO  
DISCOVER  
GOD’S WORD?  
GET  
MORE!**

Invite preschoolers to check out this week’s devotionals to discover that Jesus speaks to God on our behalf. When we sin, we ask Jesus to forgive us. We must also pray for each other (James 5:16), as Moses prayed for the Israelites. Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information, check out [www.lifeway.com/devotionals](http://www.lifeway.com/devotionals).



# Small Group OPENING

**SESSION TITLE:** The Golden Calf

**BIBLE PASSAGE:** Exodus 32:1-35; 34:1-9

**MAIN POINT:** God's people worshiped a golden calf.

**KEY PASSAGE:** Hebrews 3:5-6

**BIG PICTURE QUESTION:** What is God's plan? God's plan is to rescue His people.

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## Welcome time

- "God Gives Us Everything We Need" song
- offering basket
- Allergy Alert download
- favorite toys related to the Bible story theme

Play the unit theme song in the background as you greet preschoolers and follow your church's security procedures. Set an offering basket near the door to collect at an appropriate time. Post an allergy alert, if necessary. Set out a few favorite theme-related toys, such as puzzles and blocks.

## Activity page

- "Broken Tablets" activity page, 1 per child
- pencils or crayons

Guide preschoolers to match the broken pieces with where they fit on the stone tablets.

**SAY** • In our Bible story today, Moses broke two stone tablets God had written on. Moses broke them because he was angry. Let's find out why Moses was so angry.

## What's more important?

Invite all of the preschoolers to stand in the middle of the room. Explain that you are going to call out different statements. If a child agrees that what you've said is very important, she will run to one wall. If a child thinks it's not important, she will run to the opposite wall. If a child doesn't know, she may remain in the middle of the room. Sample statements:



- It is important to go to school.
- It is important to eat green vegetables.
- It is important to watch TV.
- It is important to play video games.
- It is important to hug my mom and dad.
- It is important to go to church.
- It is important to love God.
- It is important to take care of my toys.

**SAY** • Many of these things are good and important, but nothing is more important than loving God. Today we're going to learn that the Israelites worshiped something other than God. That's called sin.

## Hop the big picture question

Tape sheets of paper with the big picture question and answer (one word per page) on the floor in a straight line. Invite preschoolers to hop on each page as you say the big picture question aloud. Invite children to say it with you.

**SAY** • Who can say our big picture question and answer?

[*Invite volunteers to do so.*] ***What is God's plan?***

***God's plan is to rescue His people.*** God rescued His people from Egypt, and He sent Jesus to rescue us from sin.

- paper
- markers

## Transition to Bible study

To gain the attention of all the preschoolers to move them to Bible study, show the countdown video, flip off the lights, or clap a simple rhythm for the children to copy. Invite preschooler to hold up one finger to represent “the one true God” as they move to Bible study.

- countdown video (optional)

# Large Group LEADER

**SESSION TITLE:** The Golden Calf

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## Introduce the Bible story

- Giant Timeline or Big Story Circle

Once preschoolers are seated, point to the recent Bible stories on the giant timeline or big story circle. Invite preschoolers to raise their hand and tell you what they can remember from each Bible story.

**SAY •** God is so amazing and so good! **God rescued Moses to save His people. God showed Egypt that only He is God.** Then **God gave His people food and water** in the wilderness! There is no one like God! Today we're going to learn that God's people made the wrong choice to worship something other than God. Let's see what happened.

## Watch or tell the Bible story

- Bible
- "The Golden Calf" video
- Bible Story Picture Poster

Open your Bible to Exodus 32.

**SAY •** Our Bible is God's words. All of God's words are true. The Bible doesn't tell us how great people are. The Bible tells us that people are sinful, but God is holy and good. Today's Bible story comes from Exodus. Show the Bible story video "The Golden Calf" or tell the Bible story in your own words using the script provided. Use the bolded version for younger preschoolers.

## Talk about the Bible story

**SAY • God's people worshiped a golden calf!** God's people disobeyed God, and Moses asked God to forgive them. Moses talked to God for the people. When we sin, Jesus talks to God for us. Jesus never sinned. God forgives those who trust in Jesus.

• Main Point Poster

Ask the following review questions:

1. Who talked to Moses on top of the mountain? (*God*)
2. Was Moses on the mountain a long time or a short time? (*long time*)
3. What did Aaron make for the Israelites to worship? (*a golden calf*)
4. What did Moses do for the people? (*asked God to forgive them*)

## Learn the big picture question

**SAY • *What is God's plan? God's plan is to rescue His people.*** All people need to be rescued from sin. God sent Jesus to rescue people from sin so we can be with Him forever.

• Big Picture Question Poster

## Practice the key passage

Open your Bible to Hebrews 3:5-6. Read the key passage aloud. Sing the key passage song, "Confidence of Our Hope."

• Key Passage Poster

• "Confidence of Our Hope" song

**SAY •** Our key passage shows that Jesus obeyed God's plan to rescue people from sin. Jesus never sinned. God forgives us from all of our sins when we trust in Jesus.

## Transition to small groups

# Small Group ACTIVITIES

**SESSION TITLE:** The Golden Calf

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**MAIN POINT:** God's people worshiped a golden calf.

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• play dough

## No other gods for me!

Pass out yellow play dough to each of the preschoolers. Ask them to build themselves a small golden calf. Once they have finished, count to three and ask the children to shout “No other gods for me!” and smash their play dough calf.

**SAY • God's people worshiped a golden calf** instead of God. They said the golden calf brought them out of Egypt, but that is not true! God's people disobeyed God, and Moses asked God to forgive them. All of us have sinned, but Jesus never sinned. God forgives those who trust in Jesus.

## Bowl down golden calves

- “Golden Calf” printable
- 6 full, sealed water bottles
- ball

Print and cut out the calves on the “Golden Calf” printable. Use tape to attach each calf to a new water bottle. Set the water bottles on the floor in a bowling formation. Invite the preschoolers to line up single file a few feet away. Give the first preschooler in line a ball and invite him to roll it at the golden calves to knock them over. Continue playing until each child has bowled.

**SAY •** Moses had been on top of the mountain talking with God. God wrote down 10 special rules with His own finger on stone tablets. God sent Moses running

down the mountain when **God's people worshiped a golden calf**. Moses was so angry, he threw the stone tablets and smashed them! God's people disobeyed God, and Moses asked God to forgive them. God forgives those who trust in Jesus.

## Worship God parade

Invite preschoolers to march with you as you play the unit theme song or another worship song. Invite preschoolers to pump their arms and lift their knees as they march. Children may also sidestep, hop, skip, twirl, or tiptoe. After a few moments, stop the music and invite the children to shout "worship God!" Play again as time allows.

**SAY** • People should worship God, but **God's people worshiped a golden calf!** God's people disobeyed God, and Moses asked God to forgive them. Jesus talks to God for us. Jesus never sinned. God forgives those who trust in Jesus.



- "God Gives Us Everything We Need" song (optional)

## Draw with metallic markers

Provide metallic markers and paper. Invite preschoolers to use the markers to draw scenes from this unit's Bible stories. Be ready to offer suggestions for preschoolers who struggle with ideas.

**SAY** • These are called metallic markers because they are the color of metal. Gold is a metal. God created gold. **God's people worshiped a golden calf.** The people worshiped something God created instead of God Himself! God's people disobeyed God, and Moses asked God to forgive them. God forgives those who trust in Jesus.

- metallic markers
- paper

- various puzzles
- Bible story pictures from Unit 4 (optional)
- scissors (optional)

## Work puzzles

Gather several puzzles for preschoolers to work. Consider printing copies of the Bible story pictures for this unit and cutting them into puzzles. Do not provide duplicate puzzles. As a preschooler works different puzzles, comment on how he must wait until his friend completes a puzzle before he can work that puzzle himself.

**SAY •** The Israelites were tired of waiting for Moses to return from the mountain. They told Aaron that they needed another god to lead them because they did not know what happened to Moses. **God's people worshiped a golden calf.** God's people disobeyed God, and Moses asked God to forgive them. Moses talked to God for the people. When we sin, Jesus talks to God for us. Jesus never sinned. God forgives those who trust in Jesus.

## Snack

Play the countdown video to signal the end of activities. Guide preschoolers to clean their areas. Take a restroom break and wash hands. Gather preschoolers for snack time. Thank God for the snack.

Take a long time preparing the snack while the preschoolers wait. Remind the preschoolers how the Israelites grew tired waiting for Moses to return from the mountain and sinned by worshiping a golden calf.

- countdown video (optional)
- Allergy Alert download
- snack food
- paper cups and napkins

## Transition

When a child finishes her snack, guide her to throw away any trash. She may select a book or puzzle to examine, play quietly with play dough or a favorite toy, or color the Bible story coloring page.

Offer the journal page and invite preschoolers to draw a picture of two stone tablets. Remind preschoolers that God made two more stone tablets because Moses broke the first two. Pray for the children.

**SAY** • God, You are holy. There is no one like You. You and You alone deserve to be worshiped. Forgive us when we do not worship You. Thank You for sending Jesus. He never sinned. He always obeyed You perfectly. Thank You for forgiving our sin when we trust in Jesus. Amen.

If parents are picking up their children at this time, tell them something that their child enjoyed doing or did well during the session. Distribute the preschool big picture cards for families.

- Journal Page printable, 1 per child
- Bible Story Coloring Page
- crayons
- *Big Picture Cards for Families: Babies, Toddlers, and Preschool*



# Journal Page

## God the Redeemer

**Key Passage:** Hebrews 3:5-6

**Big Picture Questions:** What is God's plan?  
God's plan is to rescue His people.

**Session 1:** Moses Was Born and Called  
*Exodus 1:8-2:10, 23-25; 3:1-4:20*  
God rescued Moses to save His people.

**Session 2:** The Plagues, the Passover, and the  
Crossing of the Red Sea  
*Exodus 5-14*  
God showed Egypt that only He is  
God.

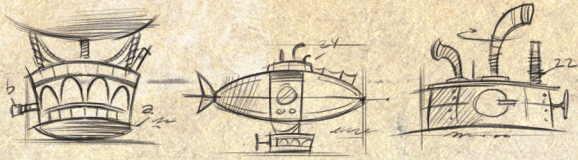
**Session 3:** The Wilderness Test  
*Exodus 15:22-17:7*  
God gave His people food and water.

**Session 4:** The Golden Calf  
*Exodus 32:1-35; 34:1-9*  
God's people worshiped a golden calf.

**Session 5:** The Ten Commandments: Love God  
*Exodus 19:1-20:11; 31:18*  
God gave us rules to show that He is  
holy.



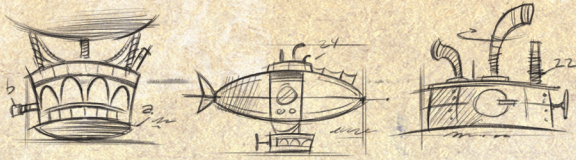




**Moses was  
faithful as a  
servant ... But  
Christ is faithful  
as the Son.  
Hebrews 3:5-6**





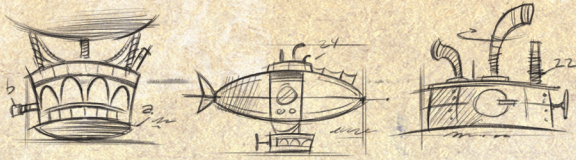


Moses verily was  
faithful ... as a  
servant, ... But  
Christ as a son.

Hebrews 3:5-6







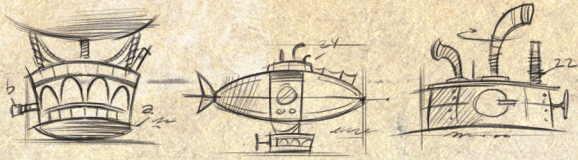
Moses was  
faithful as a  
servant ...

But Christ was  
faithful as a Son.

Hebrews 3:5-6







Now Moses was  
faithful ... as a  
servant ... but  
Christ is faithful  
... as a son.

Hebrews 3:5-6





God's people  
worshipped a  
golden calf.





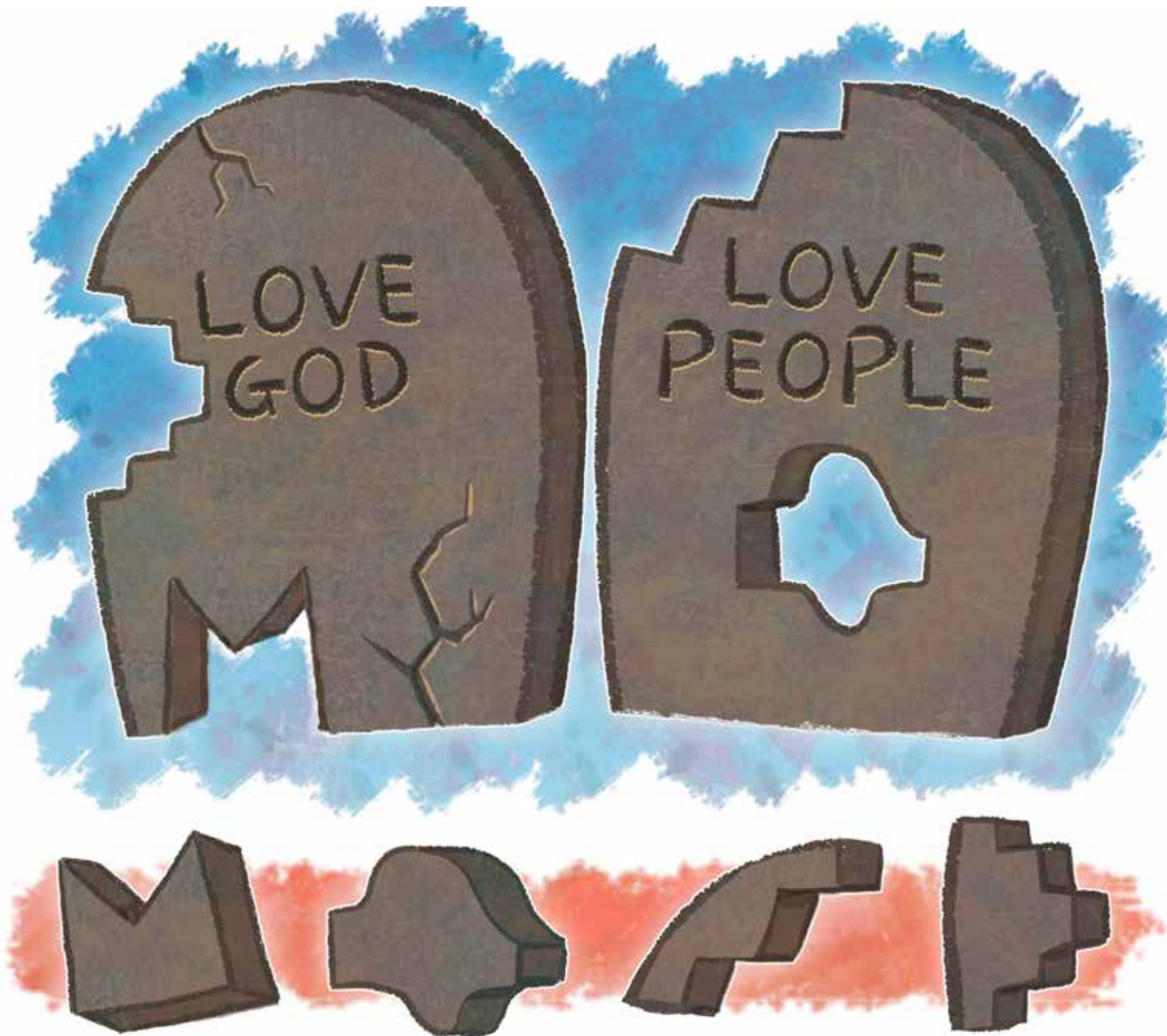




# Broken Tablets

DOWNLOAD THE  
TGP FAMILY APP

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Draw a line connecting the broken off pieces of the tablets to where they fit.



**KEY PASSAGE:** Hebrews 3:5-6

**BIG PICTURE QUESTION:**

- What is God's plan? God's plan is to rescue His people.

**BIBLE STORY:**

**THE GOLDEN CALF**

- Moses talked to God on a mountain for a long time.
- The Israelites worshiped a golden calf instead of God.
- Moses asked God to forgive His people.

**FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS:**

- Tell about a time you had to wait. Is waiting easy or hard?
- Why does sin make God angry?
- What should we do when we sin?

**FAMILY ACTIVITY:**

- Talk about things or activities that may interfere with worshiping God. Take steps to remove idols from your home.
- Take it further: Worship God together through singing. Pray that you will keep God first.

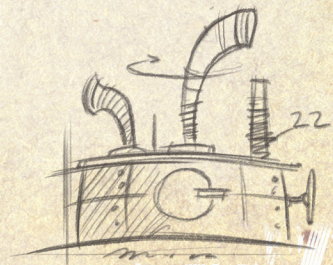
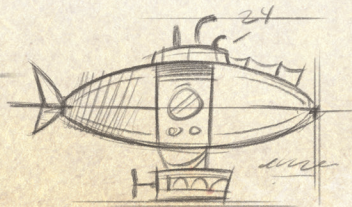
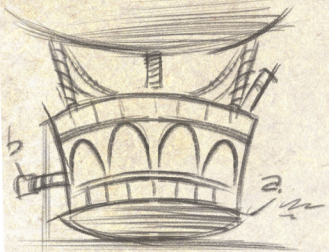
*Preschool Activity Pages*  
Unit 4, Session 4







# What is God's plan?





# What is God's plan?

God's plan is to  
rescue His people.

