

The Golden Calf

Wednesday Plan

SCRIPTURE

Exodus 32

MEMORY VERSE

Exodus 20:3

OPTIONAL VIDEO

The Golden Calf

<https://southside.cc/840-463>

God alone gets first place.

For the Teacher

Wednesday night reinforces what the kids learned on Sunday. Don't re-teach the whole golden calf story — they heard it. Tonight is about putting words on the *thing in their own life* that competes with God for first place, then physically getting rid of it.

KEY TRUTH

God alone gets first place.

Same bottom line as Sunday, by design. Wednesday uses the exact same sentence the kids heard on Sunday. Repeat it. Have them say it back. Don't paraphrase or soften it — the repetition is the point.

Idolatry is broader than gold statues. If anything from Sunday's prep is worth re-reading tonight, it's this. The "idols" the kids will name tonight will be things like screens, sports, popularity, getting their way. Take those answers seriously. The first commandment is not just for ancient people who melted earrings into cows. It's for kids who'd rather watch the next video than say a prayer.

What to skip. Don't re-read all of Exodus 32. The kids did Sunday. Tonight you'll re-read Exodus 32:1 and 32:7-8 (the speed of the failure) plus Exodus 20:3 (the verse). If a kid wasn't there Sunday, give them a one-sentence catch-up: "While Moses was on the mountain, God's people built a gold calf and worshipped it instead of God."

Energy management. Tonight's "Smash the Idol" activity is loud and physical on purpose. Crushing the foil and tossing it into the trash is the kinetic image of the lesson — Moses ground the calf to powder, and tonight the kids do the same with their own distractions. Bring the energy down for the prayer card and closing.

MATERIALS

- Bibles for every student
- Whiteboard or large paper, markers
- Squares of aluminum foil (one per kid, roughly 8×8 inches)
- A black permanent marker
- A trash bin or bag the kids can throw the crumpled foil into
- **First Things First** prayer cards (printed in advance from this week's activities)
- Pencils

1. Gather

Welcome the kids back. Tell them:

SAY

On Sunday we learned one big idea, and we're going to learn it again tonight. Say it with me: God alone gets first place.

Have them say it back. Then again, louder. Then in a whisper.

Write it on the board.

Tell them tonight is going to be different from Sunday — they're going to make something out of foil, write a word on it, and then crush it. But first, a quick review.

2. The Story

Quick Review

ASK

On Sunday, what did God's people build while Moses was up on the mountain?

You're looking for: a golden calf. If they say "an idol" or "a statue," push them to say "a golden calf."

Re-Read the Opening

Have them open to Exodus 32:1. Pick a confident reader.

Exodus 32:1

Then have a different student read what God says about it:

Exodus 32:7–8

DISCUSSION

1. How long had Moses been gone before the people built the calf?

→ *About forty days. Not very long. They had just heard God speak from the mountain.*

2. God says they "turned aside quickly." What does it mean to turn aside quickly?

→ *To forget fast. To stop trusting God almost as soon as something gets hard or boring. The kids do this too. We all do.*

Say the bottom line again, with the kids:

SAY

God alone gets first place.

3. The Work

Smash the Idol

Hand each kid a square of aluminum foil and pass the marker around the circle. Tell them:

Shape the foil into something — anything — that sometimes pulls your attention away from God. A phone. A game controller. A ball. A trophy. A TV. Whatever it is for you.

Give them three or four minutes to shape it. Then have each kid write *one word* on it with the marker — the name of the thing their foil represents (PHONE, GAMES, WINNING, MYSELF, POPULARITY, etc.). Tell them: only they need to know what it means. They're not going to read them out loud.

When everyone has written a word, have them all stand. Read this verse out loud:

SCRIPTURE

Exodus 32:19–20

When [Moses] came near the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, Moses' anger burned hot... He took the calf that they had made and burned it with fire and ground it to powder.

Say: Moses ground the gold calf to powder. He didn't keep it around as a souvenir. Tonight we're going to do the same thing with our own. On the count of three, crush your foil, walk it to the trash bin, and throw it away.

Count to three. Let them crush and toss.

NOTE

Some kids will hesitate, especially if they wrote something that feels personal. That's good — they're getting the lesson. Don't rush them. Let them throw it away on their own timing.

When everyone is back in the circle, say:

SAY

We didn't smash a phone. We didn't smash a real game. We smashed the temptation to let those things take God's place. God alone gets first place.

Sorting What Belongs Where

Bring the kids back together and sit them down. Have them open to Exodus 20:3 and read it aloud:

SCRIPTURE

Exodus 20:3

You shall have no other gods before me.

DISCUSSION

1. Things like phones, sports, and friends aren't bad. So when do they become a problem?

→ *When they take God's spot. When you'd rather use them than spend time with God. When you'd lie or be unkind to keep them. When losing them would feel like losing everything.*

2. What's one thing you can put in front of those things this week to keep God in first place?

→ *Listen for specifics. "Pray more" is fine but vague. Push for: pray before screens, read one Bible verse before bed, thank God when something good happens, ask God for help before getting mad.*

4. The Point

First Things First Prayer Card

Hand out the **First Things First** prayer cards. Have each student fill in the prompt:

God, this week I'll keep you first by _____.

Tell them to write *one* specific way they'll put God ahead of the thing they just smashed. Not "be good." Not "pray more." A specific move. *I'll pray before I pick up my phone in the morning. I'll read one Bible verse before bed. I'll thank God when I score a goal instead of just bragging.*

NOTE

While they fill out the cards, walk around. If a kid is stuck, ask: "What did you write on your foil tonight? What's one tiny thing you could do this week to put God ahead of that?" Help them turn it into a sentence.

Memory Verse and Closing

When they're done, have everyone come back together. Read together one more time:

SCRIPTURE

Exodus 20:3

You shall have no other gods before me.

Then say the bottom line one final time, with the kids:

SAY

God alone gets first place.

Close in prayer:

PRAY

God, you are the only true God. We're sorry for all the things we let take your place — our screens, our stuff, our pride, even ourselves. Thank you for forgiving us, the same way you forgave your people in the wilderness. This week, when something tries to push you out of first place, help us remember the foil we crushed tonight. You alone get first place. Amen.