LESSON 3 **FOR LEADERS**

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.

Welcome Question

SUPPLIES: Golden Calf Welcome Question Slide



At your start time ...

Call on several kids to share their answers to the Welcome Question: **What do you give a lot of your time and attention to?**

In today's story, we'll see how a group of people gave their attention to something other than God and what happened as a result. But now, it's time to be curious!

Ask the following "I'm curious" questions. Say, "I'm curious ..." before each question and give kids a chance to think about and answer each one.

I'm curious ...

- **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?**

Preteen Interactive Game: OUR Favorites!

SUPPLIES: writing utensils, timer (optional), OUR Favorites! Sheet (1 per kid), Golden Calf Wonder Truth Slide



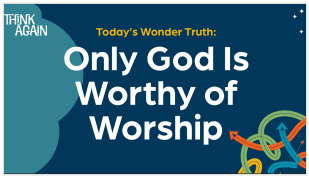


Gather the kids and give each one a writing utensil and a copy of the OUR Favorites! Sheet. Have them write down their favorite of each category in the boxes. They can ignore the FREE box for now. Once kids are finished, explain that this is like a game of Tic-Tac-Toe. Give them time to mingle among the group and find others who have written down the same favorites. If they find someone who has written the same thing in a certain box, both players can mark that box complete by drawing an "X" across the box. Play until one or more players have managed to complete a full row, column, or diagonal, or set a timer for three minutes and see how far everyone has gotten when the timer goes off.

Make It Inclusive: If there are kids in your group who are not confident writers, consider having kids complete this activity in pairs. Give each pair an OUR Favorites! Sheet and a writing utensil. One kid can do the writing, but include both kids' favorites in each box. Then they can mark the box complete if one of their favorites matches someone else's.

We all have different favorites and things we love, and that's OK! But it's important to remember that no matter what we love, we show our love to God the most. We worship Him first.

What does it mean to *worship* something? Allow kids to respond.



When we *worship* something, it means we make that the most important thing in our lives. We give it the most time and attention. When we worship God, nothing we do or have is more important than Him. We give Him all of the honor and glory. We put Him first, making Him the most important in our lives. Nothing takes the place of Him. We'll see in today's story that only God is worthy of our worship. Display the Golden Calf Wonder Truth Slide. **Today's Wonder Truth is ONLY GOD IS WORTHY OF WORSHIP.**

God's Big Story

SUPPLIES: Bibles (1 per kid)



Display the Golden Calf Title Slide. 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.

Let's start by reading part of God's big story directly from the Bible. Afterward, we'll watch and experience more of the story!

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.

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

Elementary Questions

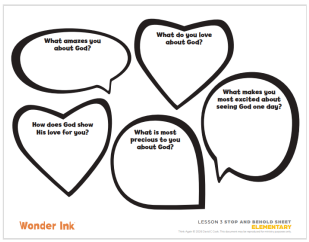
- **Who was on the mountain with God?** *(Moses)*
- **Why did Moses go to Mount Sinai?** *(God commanded Moses to come up the mountain to meet with Him, so that God could give him all of His instructions for His people. [See Exodus 24])*
- **Why did the people make a golden calf?** *(Moses took a long 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.)*
- **What promise to God did the Israelites break?** *(to not make any idols, to worship only the one true God)*
- **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.)*
- **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?**

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 Responding in Worship: Stop and Behold

SUPPLIES: writing utensils, coloring utensils, Stop and Behold Sheet (1 per kid), Salvation Path (optional)

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!

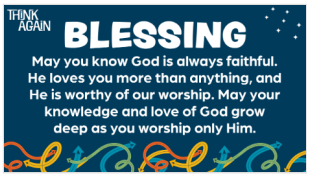
Give each kid a copy of the Stop and Behold Sheet. Encourage kids to spread out across your small group area.

Make It Inclusive: Some kids may have difficulty reading or writing. Encourage kids to sit close to you 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.

Blessing Your Kids

Display the Golden Calf Blessing Slide. Speak this blessing over your kids, as a group or as individuals. If you bless kids individually, insert each kid's name at the beginning of the blessing.



Blessing: May you know God is always faithful. He loves you more than anything, and He is worthy of our worship. May your knowledge and love of God grow deep as you worship only Him.