Old Testament

Lesson 21 - The Golden Calf

Aims
* To know the key points of the story
* To understand that the most important thing for the Israelites to do was obey God

Materials
Bible story from Exodus 34-40
Visual aids
- pictures from the story
- pictures of a golden calf, the tabernacle and the ark of the covenant
Worksheets
Two instant pudding packets and other ingredients

Key words
* Idol - a statue that people worship as God
* Tabernacle - a special tent, a holy place of God
* Ark of the covenant - the box containing the ten commandments

Lesson Outline
1. Introduction
2. Story - The Golden Calf
3. Questions
4. Activities - retell the story, act out the story, worksheets, follow a recipe
5. Review the aims
6. Prayer

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1) Introduction
In last week’s story God said to the people, “I have brought you here to Mt. Sinai to be my chosen people. Will you obey me?” The Israelites promised they would. Then God said He would give them ten laws or commandments, to show them how to live in the right way. Moses went up the mountain for forty days and God gave him His laws on two tablets of stone

Did the people keep their promise to obey God? This week’s story is about what happened when Moses was away for 40 days up the mountain

2) Story - The Golden Calf
During the forty days Moses was on Mt. Sinai, the Israelites lost faith and rebelled against God. They melted down gold and made a golden calf and worshipped it. When Moses came down the mountain and saw this he was very angry and threw down the tablets of stone and they broke.
Once again the people were sorry for losing faith. Moses went back up the mountain and received two new tablets. To show the people that God was always with them, God asked a special tent to be made called the tabernacle, in which a wooden box, covered with gold was to be kept. This box called the ark of the covenant, contained the stone tablets.

3) Questions
1. What did the people think had happened to Moses? - he had died, wasn’t coming back
2. What did they want Aaron to do? - make a god they could see
3. What did Aaron do? - he melted down gold to make a golden calf
4. Which commandments did they break? - worship only one god, have no idols
5. What is an idol? - a statue you worship as God
6. How did God feel about the golden calf? - angry
7. Why did Moses break the tablets of stone? - he was angry
8. What did Moses do to the golden calf? - ground it into dust, mixed it with water and made the people drink it
9. What did Moses have to do to get new tablets? - go back to the mountain for 40 more days
10. What did God tell the people to make? - a special tent called the tabernacle

The very commandments that God wanted the people to keep, they were breaking. They were to worship only God. Can you imagine how sad God was that His people turned their backs on Him. Remember that He had just done an amazing miracle. God helped His people escape slavery AND He parted the Red Sea. Why do you think the people so quickly forgot about God?

The most important thing for the Israelites to do was obey God and follow the ten commandments. They promised to it, but when Moses was gone for so long, they forgot all the miracles God did.

4) Activities
Retell the story using the pictures

Act out the story
Children play the roles of God, Moses, Aaron and the Israelites. The teacher narrates the story and children mime the actions

Worksheets
- Find 10 differences between the pictures.
- Draw a picture of the golden calf in the empty space
- Colour the picture

Follow a recipe
Bring two instant pudding packets and ingredients to class (or some other simple recipe). Have one of the children read the instructions (or you read them aloud if you have non-readers). The first time you make the pudding follow the recipe exactly and set the mix aside. The second time you make it tell the class that you are going to do it “your way”. Put in some silly ingredients that you know will not work (soft drink instead of milk for instance). Now compare the two results. “Children, the people who made this packet of mix knew the proper ingredients to use. When I did it their way I made some very nice pudding. The one where I did it my way did not turn out very well, did it?

God knows how we should behave. He knows the best way. When we follow God’s rules and do what they say then we are doing things God’s way. Everything will be fine. If we don’t obey God
and just do things the way we want to do them then our lives will be like this pudding. It will not be a good life! The Israelites knew what the Ten Commandments were. They knew they should do things God’s way but they chose to try things their own way.”

5) Review the lesson aims
   * To know the key points of the story
   * To understand that the most important thing for the Israelites to do was obey God

6) End with a Prayer
Moses was on Mt. Sinai for forty days. He had been away so long the people thought he was never coming back.

They went to Aaron and said, "Moses has disappeared, and we don't know what has happened to him. We need a new god we can see to worship. That’s what the Egyptians did. Aaron, make us a god!"

Aaron listened to them. He asked for their gold jewellery, which he melted down and made into a large golden calf. They made offerings of food and drink to the calf and started a wild party.

God saw the Israelites feasting. "Already my people disobey me," he said angrily. Moses hurried down to the camp, carrying with him the tablets of stone. As he saw the people singing and dancing round a golden idol, he was filled with rage. He hurled down the stone tablets and smashed them on the ground. Then he ground the golden calf into powder, mixed it with water and made the people drink it. They were really sorry for what they had done and promised to obey God's laws.

After that, Moses went back up the mountain to beg God's forgiveness for what they had done. God was very angry with the Israelites, and Moses had to plead with him not to abandon his chosen people. Finally, God agreed that he would still lead the children of Israel into the Promised Land. So, Moses wrote God's commands on new tablets of stone and took them back down the mountain to the crowds waiting below. "You must now obey these laws and make a fresh start," Moses said to the people, "or the Lord will abandon you for ever." They once again promised Moses to obey God's laws.

To show the people that God was always with them, God told the Israelites to make a special tent called the tabernacle, in which a wooden box, covered with gold was to be kept. This box called the ark of the covenant, was for the stone tablets. This meant that wherever they travelled, and whenever they set up camp, the Israelites carried the law with them. The tabernacle was to be the holy place of God and the ark was the most special thing of all.
The Golden Calf
The Golden Calf

Follow Moses down the mountain. Colour the picture

To discuss:

Why did Moses break the stone tablets?

Which commandment had the Israelites disobeyed when they worshipped the golden calf?

What did Moses have to do to get new tablets of stone?
The Golden Calf

When Moses came down the mountain he saw the people worshipping a golden calf.
Draw a golden calf in the empty space.

The Tabernacle

The people built a special tent called the tabernacle and made offerings of gold and jewellery.
Find 10 differences between the pictures
The Tabernacle

God told Moses to build a special tent to worship God, called the tabernacle.

Circle 10 things different in the bottom picture.