

Aaron's Big Mistake

The Point: We worship only God.

Scripture Connect: Exodus 20:1–4; 32:1–8

Supplies for all Session 4 activities options: pencils; prepared poster; paper; markers; large wastebasket (or laundry basket); Bible; aluminum foil (2 feet of foil per child); wastebasket; mailable envelopes (1 per child); buttons, coins, or flat washers (3 per child)

The Basics for Leaders

Aaron was in a tough spot. God's people—thousands of them—wanted a god they could see and touch. They were afraid, out in the wilderness, and God was up on a mountaintop, hidden by clouds. So Aaron did what the crowd wanted: he provided a golden calf God's people could worship.

That was a mistake. A big one.

Lots of things and people have worth. And that's fine. But when we worship someone or something, we're saying more than that. Only one Someone is worthy of true worship, of being first in our lives, of being our God.

And that's ... God.

What will help you love God more? Think about that as you prepare and experience this session. As you move closer to God, the idol in your life will slide away, back where it belongs. Let's worship only God!

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OPENING ACTIVITY-OPTION 1

HOWZITGOIN'

Time: about 5 minutes, depending on attendance

Supplies: pencils, prepared poster

Before kids arrive, draw a line on a poster. Write a 1 on the left end of the line, a 10 on the right, and a 5 in the middle. As kids arrive, ask them to pencil in their initials on the line.

Say: **If this past week was so awful you wish you'd slept through it, place your initials by the 1. If it was a great week you wish you could repeat, put your initials by the 10. Place your initials anywhere on the line that shows how you feel about this past week—except exactly on the 5. Because there's no such thing as a week that's exactly half good and half bad!**

After kids have signed in, give them 30 seconds each to explain why they placed their initials where they did. Be sure to include your own initials and explain your placement on the line. Kids will begin to express themselves more over time, and hearing their stories will help you adapt this lesson to make it relevant to your kids' lives.

OPENING ACTIVITY-OPTION 2

WE'RE NUMBER 1!

Time: about 10 minutes

Supplies: paper, markers

Say: **Sports teams have pennants, and at games fans wave the pennants of their favorite team.** (Fold one sheet of paper into a pennant shape to make sure kids understand.) **We all have favorites. Maybe we have a number one team, TV show, band, or pizza topping. In the next few minutes, please create a pennant—a small flag—showing one of your favorites.** Briefly explain a favorite food you enjoy and how you might create a pennant showing that it's number one to you.

Allow kids time to create pennants and to draw pictures or write words on them.

Then say: **Let's take a few moments to show off our pennants.**

If you have a small group, give each child 30 seconds to show and tell about his or her pennant. Got a big group? Have kids form groups of three and do the same thing. Then have children circle up and discuss:

- Where in your home would you hang a pennant of your favorite thing?
- In what ways does your pennant show that you respect/like/honor the favorite you chose?
- If you were to make a pennant about God, what words or pictures would you choose to put on it? How would they show that God is number one?

Say: It's okay to be a fan of a team or a TV show. But we worship only God. That means we keep God first in our lives; we don't let anything else get between us and God. We don't let anything or anyone else become more important than God—not soccer or cheerleading or friends. If we do, we're making a big mistake, one made by a person you'll meet in a few minutes!

Big Mistakes Game

RAISE YOUR PRAISE

Time: about 10 minutes

Supplies: large wastebasket (or laundry basket)

Place the basket on the floor. Ask kids to take off their shoes and place their shoes in the basket. Then have kids lie on the floor around the basket so their feet are touching the basket. Note: If girls are wearing skirts, adjust the activity as needed. One girl wearing a skirt could act as a "yardstick," standing nearby to keep an eye on how high the basket is raised compared to her own height.

Say: **Your job is to raise this basket off the floor with your feet, as high as you can—without spilling any shoes. Once you've got it where you want it, tell me. Then I'll count to 10 to see if you can hold the basket up until I finish counting.**

Invite children to adjust their positions and then, at your signal, to see what they can do. After their first attempt ask kids to sit up and discuss:

- **What might help you raise the basket even higher?**
- **Why is it important that we work together?**

Ask kids to again get in position and, at your signal, try to raise the basket. After several attempts—and your applause for their efforts—set aside the basket and its contents. Say: **Great job! Let's talk about something else**

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we can do together: we might say that we “raise” our praise when we worship God, because our praise goes “up” to God.

Have kids discuss as a group:

- In what ways do we praise God?
- How might what we learned in our basket activity help us praise God when we’re together? (Help kids make the connection that we feel stronger when we’re together, it’s more fun, we can last longer ...)
- Why do we praise God at all?

Say: We worship only God—which means we praise him. We remember that he made us. We remember his love for us. We remember that God sent Jesus. We raise our praise!

Unfortunately, that’s not what happened when God’s people left Egypt and were making their way across the wilderness toward the Promised Land. They forgot to praise God. Even worse, they decided to praise something else. Let’s learn more about that.

Big Mistakes Bible Story

IDOL HANDS

Time: about 15 minutes

Supplies: Bible, aluminum foil (2 feet of foil per child)

Ask kids to join you in forming a circle, seated on the floor. Give each child about two feet of aluminum foil. Say: I’m going to read you an account of what happened when God’s people left Egypt and headed into the wilderness. They saw God do amazing things, but they got scared. Listen as I read—and when the time comes, I’ll ask you all to become instant aluminum artists!

Read aloud Exodus 32:1–3. Say: Please use pieces of your foil to create rings, earrings, maybe a bracelet or necklace for yourself. See what you can make and then wear what you create.

As kids fashion jewelry, have them discuss:

- Describe the nicest piece of jewelry you’ve seen. What makes it so special?

Allow several minutes for jewelry creation, and then ask kids to model what they've made. Continue reading aloud. Read Exodus 32:4–8.

Say: **Artists, please reshape your jewelry and create a calf out of your aluminum foil. You can each make yours any way you wish, but you've only got a few minutes.**

As kids fashion calves, have them discuss:

- **Why might it have been a bad idea for Aaron to make a calf to worship?**
- **How do you feel about building a calf right now?**

Assure kids they can continue—they'll see why it's okay in a few minutes. Allow several minutes and then ask kids to show their sculptures.

Say: **We worship only God, and that's something God's people in this story were supposed to do too. God got angry when they built the calf and worshipped it. He had the calf destroyed, but some bad things still happened because of**

what the people had done: Moses ground the calf into powder, mixed it in water, and made the people drink it. Yuck! Some people died, and "a great plague" (maybe sickness?) happened to the others (Exod. 32:20, 28, 35).

We don't want to make the same mistake those people made, right? If we'd really made the mistake of creating an idol, we should change our minds and not worship it. So let's pretend to do that. Step away from your creations. Just leave them where they are and join me in standing over here.

AGE-ALERT TIPS

If you have **mostly younger** kids, you may want to leave out some of these details.

CLOSING PRAYER

ART CRUSH

Time: about 5 minutes

Supplies: Bible, wastebasket

Ask kids to join you standing in a circle.

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Say: We know that we worship only God. That's something the people who built the calf knew too. God had told them when he gave them the 10 Commandments. Listen to the first two of those.

Read aloud Exodus 20:1–4.

The people disobeyed and bad things happened. Let's not make the same mistake. Please flatten the calf you made by jumping on it. Pause as kids retrieve their foil creations and do so. Now pick it up and scrunch it. (pause) Now toss it into this wastebasket. (pause)

Thanks! Maybe it was hard to destroy the art you worked to create. We were pretending that those were real idols, things that we worshipped instead of God. We'd have to get rid of a real idol, wouldn't we? Of course, some things we have or like to do aren't really idols. But if they start to become more important to us than God is, we need to think about that. We need to do something to make sure they're not more important to us than God is.

Let's join hands and tell God that we want to worship him only. I'll begin and end our prayer. In the middle when I get quiet, please pray out loud if you're willing. God likes to hear from us!

Pray: Dear God, forgive us if we let something come between you and us. We know you've done so much to teach us: you gave us the Bible, you sent your Son, you've sent the Holy Spirit, and you give us teachers who help us understand. Hear us as we thank you and tell you that we want to worship you only.

Pause so children who are willing can pray. End the prayer with: Thank you for hearing our prayers, God. In Jesus's name, amen.

EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY–OPTION 1

FAN CLUB

Time: about 10 minutes

Supplies: paper, pencils, mailable envelopes (1 per child)

Note: If kids will be writing to the president, the envelopes can be addressed to: The President of the United States, The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20500.

Say: It's okay to be a fan of a team or band. There are lots of worthy people and worthwhile things we can like. But we worship only God!

One person you might be a fan of is the president of the United States. That's a tough job. We learned today it's sometimes hard for leaders to make good decisions. Sending the president a nice note saying that you're praying for him would be a great thing to do.

Help kids each write an encouraging note to the president and then address an envelope. Be sure kids add their return addresses to the letters and the envelopes. If kids would rather send notes to a pastor or other leader, that's fine too. You can later help get the addresses they need.

Note: It's cheaper to batch the addressed envelopes and send them in a larger envelope. Do that for your children. If sending to the White House, you can include a note asking for each letter to be acknowledged with a return letter.

After kids finish writing, gather up letters and have kids discuss:

- **If you could be in a fan club and meet any TV or movie star, who would you want to meet? Why?**
- **What do you think is the difference between really liking someone and worshipping that person?**

Say: **We worship only God, but we can like lots of people! Maybe someday I'll join your fan club, because I like all of you!**

EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 2

TWO TOO MANY

Time: about 10 minutes

Supplies: buttons, coins, or flat washers (3 per child)

Ask children to sit in a circle on the floor. Give each child three buttons, coins, or flat washers to hold in one cupped palm. Instruct children to—at your signal—toss their objects up into the air, flip over the hand that was holding the objects, and try to catch all three objects on the back of that same hand.

After the first try—and assuming no one succeeded!—have kids discuss:

- **What will make this task easier?**

Thank kids for their ideas and then have kids try again several times—always at your signal. Then have kids remove two of the items and try the

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activity using just one item. Let them try several times; they'll experience far greater success with just one item to catch. Say:

- **It's easier to keep an eye on one item than on three, isn't it?**

Collect the objects and have the group discuss:

- **What can this activity teach us about worshipping only God?**
- **What helps you remember to worship God?**

Say: **It's hard to worship both God and other things at the same time. In fact, you can't do it. You can have only one thing be first in your life. Let's make sure it's God!**

EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 3

INQUIRING MINDS WANT TO KNOW

Time: about 5 minutes

Supplies: none

Gather kids in a circle. Ask: **How can you tell if someone worships God (puts God first)? How can you tell if someone doesn't do that?**