

God's People Worship a Golden Calf

Bible Point

God guides us...even when we go our own way.

Purpose

Boredom can be dangerous. For kids, boredom plus permanent markers can equal unwanted wall art. For teenagers, boredom plus a sleepover can lead to one too many rounds of "Truth or Dare." And for adults, boredom plus media streaming services can lead to a day of binge watching rather than productivity. In Exodus, the Israelites plus boredom equaled a gold calf. Uh-oh.

Bored people are vulnerable people; people faced with a choice—God's way, or my way? God's people chose poorly and suffered the consequences.

With this lesson, help kids turn to their Forever Friend when they're bored and follow his gracious and forgiving-but-perfect way.



Prayer

Dear God, thank you that you are a God of compassion and mercy. Forgive me for times I forget about you and take action myself. Help me show your love and mercy to kids in my care today. In Jesus' name, amen.

Prep

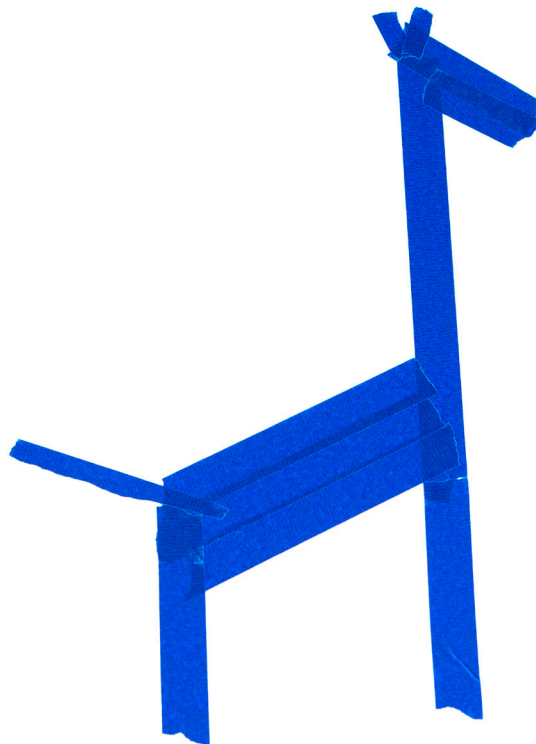
Opening Options	Sing & Play	Bible Discovery & Friendship Finale	Apply-It Options
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Option Cards* <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Nose-y Spoons</i>: plastic spoons <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Tape Charades</i>: painter's tape 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> countdown video* <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Music Video</i> DVD* <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Buddy Video</i> DVD* <input type="checkbox"/> Radar Bible Memory Buddy poster* <input type="checkbox"/> media player <input type="checkbox"/> Bible (bookmark Proverbs 3:5-6) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> "God's People Worship a Golden Calf" Bible Story poster* <input type="checkbox"/> Radar Bible Memory Buddy stickers* (1 per child) <input type="checkbox"/> Take-It-Home Flyers* (Unit 1, Week 3) (1 per child) <input type="checkbox"/> Bible (bookmark Exodus 32:1, 7-8, 15-16, 19-20) <input type="checkbox"/> empty doughnut box or pizza box <input type="checkbox"/> beach ball (optional) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Explore More</i>: Bibles, duct tape, markers <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Game</i>: no supplies

* in your **Simply Loved Kit**



Opening Options

Set up one—or both—of these intro activities to start your time together. Each activity connects kids to the Bible Point and to each other. Cut apart these Option Cards, and place one by each activity you choose. Crew Guides will follow the directions and build friendships with kids as they make discoveries together!



Nose-y Spoons

Supplies: plastic spoons

Breathe on a spoon, and then see how long the spoon will stay on your nose. Whose spoon will stick the longest? You *don't* want to share germs with friends, so “stick” with your spoon and don't share with others.

? Who's someone who has always stuck with you, no matter what?

God guides us. He always sticks with us, even when we don't stick with him. In our Bible story today, we'll hear about a time God's people did not stick with God. They went their own way, and it didn't turn out very well.

Tape Charades

Supplies: painter's tape

Take turns using tape to make animal shapes. Have friends guess the animal.

? What's your favorite animal on the planet? Tell why.

Like we guided and showed people animals with tape, **God guides us** and shows us the best way to live. Sometimes, though, we choose to ignore God and do what we want to do instead. That's sin. In our Bible story, we'll find out what happened to God's people when they made their own fake god.

Opening

Now's a great time for Opening Options. Choose one—or both—to introduce today's Bible discoveries.



countdown video (1 minute)

Help kids transition, clean up the activities, and sit with Connect Crews. A Connect Crew is a small group of kids with one Crew Guide.

Sing & Play

Welcome, friends! Let's get started with a song. Like a lighthouse guides ships at sea, **God guides us** and shows us the best way to go. Let's sing about that.



"My Lighthouse" music video

It's Opposite Day! I'll shout out actions, and you do the opposite of what I say. Ready?

- Sit down.
- Slide to the left.
- Slide to the right.
- Stand up.
- Sit down.
- Step forward.
- Step backward.
- Stand up.

Whew! Going the opposite way makes things a little tough, huh? Today we'll discover how God's people, the Israelites, didn't follow the rules God had given them. He told them to worship only him, and they did the opposite. They went their own way instead of God's way. But God still loved them and guided them.

Bible Point

That's our Bible Point: **God guides us**. Every time you hear the words "**God guides us,**" point up (demonstrate) and say, "Follow God!" Let's try that together.

- Point up and say, "Follow God!"
- Repeat several times.

Repetition cements learning, so be sure to say today's Bible Point A LOT. Have fun with it! Kids will love listening for it and responding with "Follow God!"



Supplies

- Bible
- media player
- *Music Video* DVD
 - "My Lighthouse" music video
 - "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah" music video
 - "Never Let Go of Me" music video
- *Buddy Video* DVD
 - Radar Bible Memory Buddy video (Week 3)
- Radar Bible Memory Buddy poster



Follow God!

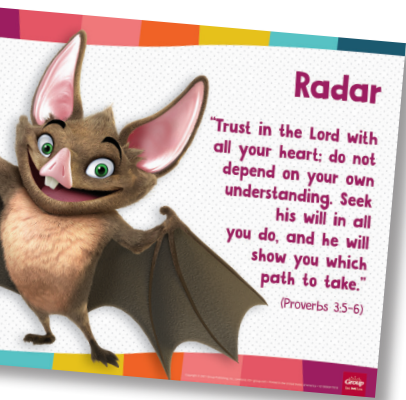
Now let's try this again. I'll shout out actions, and this time, do what I say, not the opposite. Ready?

- Slide to the left.
- Slide to the right.
- Step forward.
- Step backward.
- And sing!

 "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah" music video


Bible Memory Buddy & Verse

And now let's guide our eyes to see Radar, our Bible Memory Buddy! Show the Bible Memory Buddy poster. Radar is a bat. I wonder, how much do you know about bats? Let's find out with a This-or-That Challenge! You'll hear two fun facts about bats. It's up to you to decide which is true—this fact or that!



- ❓ **Mexican free-tailed bats can fly really fast. Up to how many miles can they fly in one night: 150 miles or 250 miles?**
- Have everyone flap their left arm to vote for *this* (150 miles) or flap their right arm to vote for *that* (250 miles).
- Make a drumroll sound by patting your thighs or the floor.
- Dramatically give the answer: **Mexican free-tailed bats can fly up to 250 miles in one night! Let's find out where they fly to as we check in with Radar and his bat buddies.**
- Watch the Bible Memory Buddy video.

 Radar Bible Memory Buddy video (Week 3)

 Let's check out our Bible Memory Verse. Show the Bible. **The Bible is God's true story of love! Even though God inspired people to write the Bible a long time ago, it still matters for us today. Let's say our verse together. I'll say a line, and then you repeat it after me.**

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart; *(hold hands over heart)*
do not depend on your own understanding. *(point at head)*
Seek his will in all you do, *(point up)*
and he will show you which path to take." *(move both arms forward and out)*
(Proverbs 3:5-6)

God guides us. *(Follow God!)* You know, as much as we *want* to always follow God, there are times we mess up and go our own way. But even then, God loves us and will guide us to a better path. He'll never, ever let go of us. Let's sing about that.

 "Never Let Go of Me" music video

Bible Discovery

Circle Up & Connect

Let's circle up and spend a little time simply getting to know each other in smaller groups called **Connect Crews**.

- Arrange kids into Connect Crews with one helper—or Crew Guide—per group.
- Invite kids to sit in knee-to-knee circles with their Connect Crews.
- Have each Crew make up a cool handshake, and have kids give the handshake to their Crew Guides.
- Have kids take turns saying their names and answering this question. Crew Guides go first.

❓ **What's your go-to activity for when you're bored?**

The Heart of the Matter

Beforehand, discreetly tell Crew Guides that when you leave the room, they should sit quietly at first but then instigate a noisy game of tag or start bopping a beach ball around the room. In other words, they are to disobey your instructions.

Bored, shmord. There's no time for boredom now! I need to go get something. I'll be back, I promise. But in the meantime, please sit quietly in your Crews. I won't be long. Start walking toward the door.

Remember, please sit quietly in your Crews and wait for me to get back. Hold tight!

Leave the room. After about 30 seconds, Crew Guides should begin stirring up the kids. Wait for a few minutes, allowing the room to become chaotic, then re-enter, holding the empty doughnut box or pizza box.

What's going on?! Never mind this. Stomp to a trash can and throw away the empty box emphatically. Then move to the front of the room.

- ❓ **Who started all this?** Invite responses from the whole group.
- ❓ **I asked you to please sit quietly in your Crews. Why didn't you follow my instructions?** Invite responses from the whole group.

Smile at the kids, then walk over to get the box from the trash and show them that it's empty.

I'm sorry. Please forgive me. I admit, I told the Crew Guides to guide you away from my instructions, so I'm not actually mad at all. Now let's really circle up in our Connect Crews and talk about what just happened.

- ❓ **How did you feel when a leader led you to disobey?**
- ❓ **Tell about a time someone was a bad influence on you.** Invite Crew Guides to share a story from their own lives to begin.
- Give Crews several minutes to discuss.

Supplies

- Bible
- "God's People Worship a Golden Calf" Bible Story poster
- empty doughnut box or pizza box
- beach ball (optional)

We call helpers **Crew Guides**. If you lead a small class, you can be the Crew Guide. Simply circle up with the kids. If you have helpers, form smaller groups so each child can be known—and so kids can befriend your helpers, too!

Be sure to follow your church's safety policies. You could remain by the door but out of sight, if needed.



It's easy to let someone lead us in the wrong direction. But thankfully, **God guides us.** (*Follow God!*) In our Bible story, God's people were bored waiting for Moses, and another leader named Aaron did *not* help God's people follow God. Let's discover what happened.

Experience the Bible Story

Let's make sure this isn't boring. Throughout the story, your faces will become emojis! You'll show me the feelings and expressions that Moses, Aaron, and God's people may have shown. Are you ready? Show me with excited faces! Pause. Here we go!

This story happened during a time God's people—the Israelites—were on their way to a new land God had promised them. God chose a guy named Moses to lead them. God had guided them and done amazing things for his people. Show me your amazed faces. Pause. Yup! They had a lot to be thankful for.

Now Moses had gone up a mountain to meet with God. That's what I said. To meet with God! Wow! Can you show me your best "wow" faces? Pause. God was giving Moses rules for his people to follow.

But the Israelites started getting bored as they waited for Moses to come back. Show me your best bored faces. Pause. Yikes! You *do* look bored! Now show them to each other. Pause.

Moses had been gone a long, long, *loooooong* time. How do you look when you're waiting for your parents to finish talking to someone? Pause. Moses talked to God for so long that the Israelites wondered if he'd ever come back. So they came up with their own plan. Let's read what it was.



Read aloud Exodus 32:1.

God's people decided that they didn't want the one *true* God; they just wanted some idol to follow. Aaron thought about that. Put on your best "I'm thinking about it" faces and show them to each other. Pause.

Then Aaron had an idea—quick, let's see your "Hey, I've got it!" faces. Pause. Aaron collected gold earrings and bracelets from the Israelites. He had the gold melted down and made into a statue of a calf. It kind of reminded him of a fake god the Israelites had seen in Egypt that was shaped like a cow. Of course, it wasn't God. Show the Bible Story poster.

The calf made the Israelites happy, so they had a big party. Show your party faces. Pause.

But God was not happy. Let's read what he said to Moses.



Read aloud Exodus 32:7-8.



Show each other your best “I’m not happy” faces. Pause. **God thought about just wiping out the Israelites. But God and Moses talked, and God decided to give his people another chance.**

Moses hurried back down the mountain. Everyone, stand up and hurry in place with me. Jog quickly in place, slowly lowering yourself to the ground as if going down a mountain. Then have everyone sit again. **As he hurried, Moses carried something special.** Hold up the box from the trash. **It wasn’t doughnuts [or pizza], but let’s see what it was.**



Read aloud Exodus 32:15-16.

These stone tablets contained God’s guidelines for his people. And what were the very first rules? Have everyone hold up one finger. **“You must have no other God before me.”** Have everyone hold up two fingers. **And “You must not make an idol.”** Uh-oh. **Show me your “busted” faces, like you’ve been caught disobeying.** Pause.

Moses didn’t like what he saw at all. His people weren’t acting like God’s special people. They were worshipping the calf, not God! What did Moses do?

Let’s see some more emoji faces. Show me your “questioning” faces. Pause. Well, let’s read and find out.



Read aloud Exodus 32:19-20.

Gross. Moses was so mad that he threw down the stone tablets and they broke. Rip the box in two. **Moses asked Aaron, “What did these people do to you to make you bring such terrible sin on them?”** Aaron answered with a lie. **Rub your hands together and show your best “I’m about to lie” sneaky faces.** Pause.

That's what Aaron must have looked like because he said, "Well, they said they wanted a god, so I had anyone with gold jewelry throw it in a fire, and it came out looking like a calf."

Huh? That doesn't even make sense! Show each other your best "Are you *kidding* me?" faces Pause. Aaron had made a big, big mistake. He didn't follow God, and he didn't help the people follow God, either. And there were consequences. In addition to having to drink the yucky water, people died and people got sick. Going their own way instead of God's way may have been fun for a moment, but it had lasting not-so-fun results.

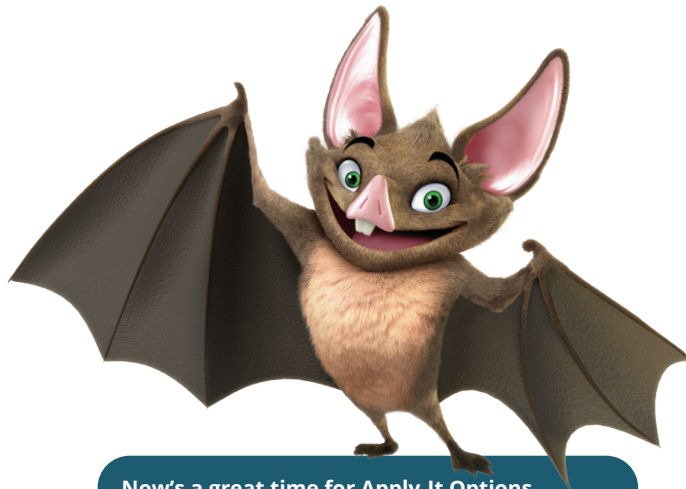
I wonder what it was like for the people as they got ready for bed that night. Go ahead and yawn like you're ready for bed. Pause. Did they feel crummy and guilty and bad about their choices? Did they wish they could do it all over again? Let's talk about this in our Crews.

- Form Connect Crew circles.
- ❓ **Think of a time you disobeyed and let someone down. How did you feel?**
Tell a quick story from your own life, then invite Crew Guides to share first.
- Give Crews several minutes to discuss.

Even when we mess up, **God guides us.** (*Follow God.*) God won't give up on us, and even though there were major consequences, God didn't give up on the Israelites, either.

The next day, Moses went back up the mountain and asked God to forgive the people. God told Moses to keep leading them toward the land he'd promised to give them. They'd still get the land. He'd still be their God. The people must have been relieved. Show me your "relieved" faces. Pause.

And they must have been thankful. Let's pray and thank God now. Lead a prayer, thanking God for his forgiveness and love.



Now's a great time for Apply-It Options. Choose one—or both—of the following reinforcement activities to support today's Bible discoveries before the Friendship Finale.


Apply-It Options

Choose one—or both—of these activities to support kids' learning after Bible Discovery.

Explore More

Supplies: Bibles, duct tape, markers

God's people kept the stone tablets in a special place called the Ark of the Covenant. But wait. I thought Moses broke them! Let's read about how they were replaced.

 Distribute Bibles, and help kids find and read Exodus 34:1-7 together.

- ❓ **Tell about a time you had to have something replaced.**
- ❓ **Why do you think these verses talk about forgiveness *and* consequences?**

The stone tablets reminded the people to follow God. We may not carry rocks around with us today, but we can wear something to remind us to follow God's way.

Make wristbands out of duct tape. Fold a piece of duct tape in half so there isn't a sticky side anymore, then form a circle that's big enough to slip on and off. Secure it with a small piece of duct tape. Write "Follow God" on the band, and add some other decorations.

God guides us. (*Follow God!*) There are lots of things we can do to remember God's guidance in our lives. We can repeat a Bible verse or keep something with us that reminds us of God. Hold up a wristband. **And we can choose friends that help us follow God.** High-five a friend.



Game

Supplies: no supplies

- Form a circle. If you have a larger group, form several circles.
- Everyone chooses an action for every syllable of his or her name. For example, "Claire" has one action, such as clapping over her head. Melody has three actions, such as hopping, clapping, and kicking up one leg. Give time for everyone to determine their actions.
- Start with the oldest person in the circle, who'll say his or her name and do the actions on each syllable. Everyone in the circle then repeats the name and actions.
- Move on to the next person. Everyone will say that person's name and actions, and then repeat the first person's, too.
- Continue going around the circle, adding names and actions each time.
- Keeping the same actions, go around the circle again and try to go faster each time.

In this game, we had to listen to our friends and do what they did. It wasn't always easy to remember, but together we figured it out. That's kind of like how God guides us. (*Follow God!*) **As God's friends, we try to listen to God and do what he says. And we don't have to do it alone. We can surround ourselves with others who'll help us follow God as he guides us.**



Supplies

- Radar Bible Memory Buddy stickers (1 per child)
- Take-It-Home Flyers (Unit 1, Week 3) (1 per child)

Friendship Finale



Radar, our Bible Memory Buddy, can help us remember that **God guides us.** (Follow God!) You'll each receive a Radar sticker to help you remember to follow God throughout your week. You can wear it now or take it home with you.

- Ask a willing child to help you demonstrate these actions.
- Make up a clapping pattern, have the child repeat it, then give him or her the sticker."
- As they give the stickers, have Crew Guides say, "[Child's name], **God guides you.**"
- Crew Guides give thumbs-up when everyone has received a sticker.

Sometimes we don't do the right thing because we aren't so sure what it is. Other times we know what's right, but we choose to do what's wrong anyway. That's sin...it's choosing our way instead of God's way.

The Bible tells us that as we grow in our friendship with God and as we spend more time with Jesus, it'll be easier to see how God is leading us. We can always tell Jesus about our sin, and he'll forgive us and help us choose God's way.

Listen while I read something about our friend Jesus. As you listen, pretend your hand is a map, and hold it in front of you as if you're figuring out which way to go. Pause. Now close your eyes, and listen for Jesus' leading.

Read the first section of the Unit 1, Week 3 Take-It-Home Flyer.

- Read the first section of the Unit 1, Week 3 Take-It-Home Flyer.
- **Now I'll give you one of these flyers to help you talk about Jesus' love in your Connect Crews and at home, too. Think of this as a practice time for talking about Jesus with your family at home.**
- Distribute Take-It-Home Flyers to Crew Guides, and have them share about their own friendship with Jesus as they discuss the "Talk Starter" question.
- Kids share prayer requests—things they'd like to tell Jesus—in their Connect Crews.
- Connect Crews pray together.
- Crew Guides distribute Take-It-Home Flyers and follow the directions to help kids fold the paper to "fly" home. 🦋

Saying each child's name in a loving way helps kids simply experience the love of Jesus through you!

