

GOD MUST BE IN FIRST PLACE

All Activity Sheets

KEY WORDS

DECREES FIRST COMMANDS FOLLOW

BIBLICAL REFERENCE

Exodus 20:1-6; 24:12-18; 32:1-33:6; and 34:1-14

LESSON OBJECTIVE

To help the students identify if there are some things that matter more to them than God, and find ways to put him first.

MEMORY VERSE

“Obey the Lord your God and follow his commands and decrees that I give you today” (Deuteronomy 27:10, NIV*).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

Nowadays, elementary-aged children have more and more activities and interpersonal relationships outside the home and family than in the past. In addition, they find it easier to distinguish what is right from what is wrong, as well as to differentiate reality from fantasy. As they develop these capacities further, the temptation to give more importance to other things or people than to God becomes stronger. While they are young, your students need to know this important truth: God must have the first place in their lives and, although at this age they cannot fully understand it, they can listen to it and begin, little by little, to assimilate its meaning.

This lesson could pose some difficult questions for children. For example: “Do I have to love God more than Mom or Dad?” Or “Is it wrong that I want to have a video game?” Perhaps the best way to respond to a child of this age is with clear and sure statements, such as: “When we love God more than anything else, we have more love for people,” or “It is okay to want to have a video game, as long as you can be happy even if you do not have it.”

In this lesson you will be able to give your students examples of what it means to put God first. The best illustration you can use is your own life. By seeing how you love and serve God, they will learn what it means to love God above all.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

We try to solve the problem of organization by reading books on time management or by attending workshops where we are taught to set priorities in life. We spend significant amounts of money just to find the right tool to help us organize our busy life. We are careful to enter dates and events in our agenda, in visible places, or in piles of notes.

However, let's forget for a moment all those notes and tricks that we use to organize ourselves, and let's see what Exodus 20 tells us. Many years ago, God created a plan to help us manage our priorities. This plan is constituted by the Ten Commandments. The first two commandments teach us that to correctly establish priorities, we must begin by giving God the first place in our life. Although it may sound simplistic, this is a truth capable of completely transforming our life. God separated us for himself, we are a chosen people; we are his and he is our God. This fundamental principle requires a life entirely committed to the Lord and what he wants for us. If we can understand that, it will be easier for us to put the other things in their place.

The second principle that we can apply to keep God first is to prevent anything else from having the importance of God. That means anything that can have the priority that belongs only to him. That could be a job, a high-level position, a big house, a sports car, or maybe a certain prestige or economic position that we have or want to reach. There are many aspects of life that we can allow to rival God ... to take his place of importance. This easily happens when we divide our life into areas and assign one to God at the same level as those we assign to other interests. We have received a commandment: put God first and give ourselves completely to him.

The second commandment has to do with our "image" of God. In biblical times, idols were made in which the concept of the attributes of God were expressed. For example, the figure of a bull represented his strength or ability to procreate. But no matter how hard we try, human beings cannot adequately represent God by means of a visual or mental image. Just as it is wrong to worship something other than God, it is also wrong to create a visible figure to represent him. We must trust in the revelation that God gives us through the Scriptures, his action in history, the person of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. "God first!" It is easy to say, but hard to live. However, when we voluntarily give him first place, the other priorities will fall in the right place.

INTRODUCE THE LESSON

Who wants to be the first?

Before the session, write the following on construction or other paper, and post the signs in three areas of the meeting place. They should say: "I would love to be first." "It would be the same for me to be or not to be first." "I would not want to be first."

In the group, say: "Today we will talk about what someone can feel when they are first to do something. I will read some sentences. After each sentence, each person will go to the corner where the sign describes how they feel about what I read."

Read the three posters with the children. Then read some sentences, such as the following:

What would you think if you were the first one to ...? (Each time the children choose something, ask them why they chose to go to that particular corner with which they identified themselves.)

Choose a treat from a tray.

Read the Bible out loud.

Choose the television show that will be seen at home.

Bathe before going to bed.

Go to bed at night.

Open a Christmas gift.

The importance of this activity is that the children understand what it means to be first.

TEACH THE LESSON

God or a golden calf?

"We will do all the things Yahweh has said. We will obey him." This was the promise that the people made to God after he spoke to them through Moses.

God told Moses, "Go to the mountain and meet me there. I will give you the stone tablets with my laws written on them." God was

giving them the Ten Commandments because he loved them, and he knew that if they obeyed his laws, they would be good and they would have joy, and they would honor him with their behavior.

Moses spoke to the leaders of the people, "In my absence, my brother Aaron and his assistant will be in charge of everything. If you have a problem, take it to them."

Moses climbed to the top of the mountain to meet God, and remained there forty days and forty nights. The Creator gave him the stone tablets, on which were written the Ten Commandments. And, he also gave him other important instructions.

In the camp, at first everything seemed fine. But, after a while, people started to worry. When they looked towards the mountain, all they saw was smoke and fire. Finally, the people approached Aaron and said, "Please, make us gods that will be with us and guide us. Moses took us out of Egypt, but now we do not know what happened to him."

Aaron got tired of so much whining and so many complaints. His task was to teach the people to worship the only true God, and only him. But, now he did not have the courage to obey. "Bring me your golden earrings," he said to the Israelites. Then, he melted the gold and gave it the shape of a beautiful calf. Then he said, "Israel, here is your god who took you out of Egypt." The Israelites liked the gleaming golden calf. Looking at it, they felt as if God himself was there with them, and not far away on the top of a mountain. Aaron also built an altar for the golden calf. And then he told them, "Tomorrow we will have a great celebration and we will worship God."

The next day, the town burned offerings in honor of the golden calf. They worshiped it as if it was God, and they began to celebrate. They ate, they drank, they danced and they sang. They forgot to obey the Lord and began to disobey. God knew what they were doing. And by the way, he was very angry! He loved them very much, but they were ruining all the good plans he had for them. Then God spoke to Moses and said, "These people are stubborn and disobey me. I'm going to destroy them completely."

"No, my God, please do not do that!" Moses begged. "You took these people out of Egypt, and if you destroy them now, the Egyptians will say that you are a wicked god. Please forgive the people."

God answered him, "Okay, I will not completely destroy them." Moses hurried down from the mountain. He could already hear the hustle and bustle in the camp. He approached and then he saw the golden calf that the people worshiped. Thud! Moses threw down the stone tablets. Crash! The tables broke into a thousand pieces. Then he took the golden calf and threw it in the fire.

Then he asked Aaron, "What did these people do to you that you brought such great sin upon them?" Aaron tried to explain, but his excuses were very silly, so he blamed the people. Then Moses moved away from Aaron. "Whoever is on Yahweh's side, join me over here now!" Moses cried. And, some of the people came to stand close to him. The next day, Moses said to the people, "You have committed a great sin, but I will now go up the mountain to where Yahweh is. Maybe I'll be able to convince him to forgive your evil."

People regretted what they had done. They all cried and took off their nice clothes and jewelry to show how badly they felt. God forgave the people, although he also had to punish them for their sin. Then he told Moses to return to the mountain, and God himself wrote the Ten Commandments in two other tablets. And then, he did something wonderful: he came close enough to Moses so that he could see God, even just a little bit.

"I'm Yahweh," he said to Moses. "I'm a merciful and holy God, slow to anger and great in mercy and truth ... who forgives sin." Then, God made him a promise: "I will do wonders that have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation. But you and the people must obey me. You must not bow to any other god. Only before me!"

CONNECT THE LESSON

Put God first!

Guide the students in the activity craft for this session from Student Activity Sheet #227-A and #227-B. Ask the children to cut out, color, and cover the door pendant, the Bible bookmark, and the mini poster with plastic paper. While working on the craft, take the time to review the Bible story with questions like:

1. Who were the characters in the story? 2. How did the people of Israel disobey God? 3. What did God ask the people to do? 4. Why does God want to be in the first place in our lives?

Add more questions that you can prepare yourself.

PRACTICE THE MEMORY VERSE

[Download Additional Memory Verse Activities PDF](#)

[Download Suggestions for Bible Memorization PDF](#)

Puzzle verses

Prepare two sets of cards with one word on each card: one set with the memory verse and one set with commandments 1 and 2. Have the children form two teams and distribute a set of cards to each group. Helping each other, they will assemble the Bible verse or commandments by placing each card in its corresponding place. The group that finishes first wins.

Then they can turn the cards upside down on the table, and repeat the memory verse as a group, and the commandments as a group. Then, the groups can exchange cards so that all the children learn the verse and the two commandments. Tell them to practice Commandments 3 and 4 for the next session. They will continue with the same activity of memorizing and assembling the puzzle texts next week.

Tell the children to take their crafts home to help them remember all week that they should put God first in every part of their lives. You can add something like: "When we give God first place, we are honoring him, and we receive his blessing for both us and those around us. Remember to read the Bible this week. You can place your new bookmark on the reading page of today, and re-read the story of the golden calf at home."

WRAP-UP

Pray

Pray with the children, asking God to help them obey him during the week, giving him first place in all their activities and in every place.

Encourage

Encourage the children to put God first in every part of their lives. You can add something like: "When we give God first place, we are honoring him, and we receive his blessing for both us and those around us."

Invite

Encourage the students to attend the next session by telling them something interesting about it. Ask them to also invite their friends.