

mike slaughter

# first



putting God first  
in living and giving

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Children's Leader Guide

## **Program Components**

### **Book**

*shiny gods: finding freedom from things that distract us*

### **DVD**

*shiny gods: finding freedom from things that distract us*

Video programs with downloadable leader guide

### **Program Flash Drive with Booklet**

*first: putting GOD first in living and giving*

Instructions for planning and using the program

### **Devotions**

*first: putting GOD first in living and giving*

Daily meditations to use during the program

### **Youth Study Edition**

*first: putting GOD first in living and giving*

Book for youth to use during the program, with leader helps

### **Children's Leader Guide**

*first: putting GOD first in living and giving*

Lesson plans for younger and older children

### **Program Kit**

*first: putting GOD first in living and giving*

One of each component

Mike Slaughter

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Children's Leader Guide

by Sally Hoelscher

Abingdon Press  
Nashville

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# To the Leader

The leader guide *first: putting GOD first in living and giving*, by Mike Slaughter, is a four-week, all-church stewardship program that helps us discern our gifts as individuals and as a church, realize that the gifts come from God, and put them to use in the world. The program is based on Mike Slaughter's book, *shiny gods: finding freedom from things that distract us*.

In the belief that giving and stewardship begin at an early age, we have included this study to use with children during the program, with topics and activities that parallel what the adults and youth in the congregation are doing during those four weeks.

The lessons in this guide, designed for children five to eleven years old, are presented in a large-group/small-group format. Children begin with time spent at activity centers, followed by time together as a large group. Children end the lesson in small groups determined by age. Each lesson plan contains the following sections:

## Focus for the Teacher

The information in this section will provide you with background information about the Bible story and Bible verse for the week. Use this section for your own study as you prepare the week's lesson.

## Explore Interest Groups

Ideas for a variety of activity centers will be found in this section. These activities will prepare the children to hear the Bible story. Allow the children to choose one or more of the activities that interest them.

## Large Group

The children will come together as a large group to hear the Bible story. This section begins with a transition activity followed by the Bible story and a Bible verse activity. A worship time concludes the large group time.

## Small Groups

Children are divided into age level groups for small group time. Depending on the size of your class, you may need to have more than one group for each age level. It is recommended that each small group contain no more than ten children.

### Younger Children

The activities in this section are designed for children five to seven years old.

### Older Children

The activities in this section are designed for children eight to eleven years old.

## Reproducible Pages

At the end of each lesson are reproducible pages that can be photocopied and handed out for the children to use during that lesson's activities.

At the end of this guide, you'll find suggestions for creating an all-church event, along with a reproducible invitation to a family activity, "A Celebration of Giving."

Blessings to you and the children as you practice *putting GOD first!*

# 1 Putting God First

## Objectives

The children will

- hear Exodus 20:1-7 and 32:1-24.
- learn how the Israelites turned away from God to worship an idol.
- discover that it is important to keep God number one in their lives.
- explore what it means to put God first in their lives.

## Bible Story

The Israelites Worship a Golden Calf:  
Exodus 20:1-7 and 32:1-24

## Bible Verse

"You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your mind, and with all your strength." (Mark 12:30)

## Focus for the Teacher

### God Is Number one

It is appropriate that the first of the Ten Commandments is to put God first.

Exodus 20:3 reads, "You must have no other gods before me."

The second and third commandments reinforce the first. Do not make, bow down to, or worship idols. Do not treat God's name lightly. There is nothing ambiguous about these commandments. God demands our loyalty. At the time Moses received the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai, God had recently delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. The Israelites had witnessed the plagues, crossed the Red Sea on dry land, and received manna in the wilderness. One would think that loyalty to God would be a given. But, as we see in today's Bible story, the Israelites had short memories.

### The Bible Verse

Today's Bible verse is the greatest commandment as named by Jesus. "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with

all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30). Though the words are different from those used the first three of the Ten Commandments, the message is the same. Jesus was raised Jewish and was familiar with the teachings of the Torah.

"You must  
have no  
other gods  
before me."  
(Exodus 20:3)

### Golden Calves

While Moses was on Mt. Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments from God, the Israelites who were left behind became restless. The people wanted a god they could see, something tangible they could bow down to and worship. Aaron, Moses' brother, gave in to their demands, collected their gold jewelry, and used it to make a statue of a golden calf. Aaron built an altar for the golden calf, and the people worshipped it. This sounds ridiculous to us. We would never bow down to a statue of a cow, regardless of what it was made of. That may be true, but can we truly say that we always put God first? What are the "golden calves" that lure us away from God today?

# Explore Interest Groups

*Be sure that adult leaders are waiting when the first child arrives. Greet and welcome each child. Get the child involved in an activity that interests him or her and introduces the theme for the day's activities.*

## God Is Number one

- **Say:** The Bible tells us that we are to put God first in our lives. Right now you will make a spinner that will make God number one.
- Give each child a copy of Number One Spinner and have him or her cut out each circle.
- Have each child use a paper punch to put holes in each circle where indicated.
- Have each child place the two circles together, back-to-back, lining up the punched holes. The word *GOD* facing toward them should be right side up, and the number one facing outward on the back should be upside down.
- Give each child two rubber bands.
- Have each child thread one of the rubber bands halfway through the lined-up holes on one side of the circle, then insert one half of the rubber band through the other half and pull tightly to attach the rubber band to the circles.
- Have each child repeat this procedure with the other rubber band on the other side of the circle.
- Show each child how to place one rubber band on each index finger and wind up the circle using his or her thumbs.
- Invite the children to pull their index fingers gently apart from each other as the rubber bands unwind and watch as the word *GOD* is placed inside the number one.

## God First Matching Game

- Give each child a copy of the Bible Verse Cards and have him or her cut out the cards.
- Have each child find a partner.

## Prepare

- ✓ Photocopy the Number One Spinner page at the end of this lesson onto cardstock for each child.
- ✓ Provide scissors, paper punches, and rubber bands.

## Prepare

- ✓ Photocopy the Bible Verse Cards at the end of this lesson onto cardstock for each child.
- ✓ Provide scissors.

✓ Note: After this activity, the game cards may be saved and used for the older children's activity later in the lesson.

## Prepare

✓ Write each of the following words on a separate piece of construction paper: *put, GOD, first*. You will also need thirteen blank pieces of construction paper.

✓ Lay the pieces of construction paper face down on the floor in a four-by-four grid. Make sure that the words *put GOD first* are next to each other in proper order, reading across, down, or diagonally.

✓ Use masking tape to mark a line on the floor behind which children must stand. Consider using separate lines for children of different ages.

- Have each pair of children combine their game cards to make a complete set.
- Have each pair of children shuffle their cards together and then lay the cards out between them in rows, with the words face-down.
- **Say:** Take turns turning over two cards and trying to find a match. If the cards do not match, turn them back over. It is then the other person's turn. If the cards do match, collect the cards. You then get another chance to find a match. It is your turn until you no longer find a match. But there is one more rule. The Bible tells us that we are to put God first. No pairs may be collected until the matching God cards are found. If you find a match before the pair of God cards is discovered, you must turn that match back over.
- Encourage the children to play the game.

## God First Beanbag Toss

- **Say:** There is an important three-word message hidden among these pieces of paper. When you toss a beanbag onto one of the pieces of paper, I will turn it over.
- Invite the children to take turns tossing a beanbag, and turn over the papers they hit.
- When *put GOD first* has been successfully uncovered, congratulate the children.
- If time permits, reconfigure the game board so *put GOD first* is in a new location, and let the children play the game again.

# Sort It Out

- Show the children a blank index card.
- **Say:** I have a bunch of index cards that need sorting, but first they need to be found. They are hidden around the room.
- Have the children find all the index cards.
- **Say:** Each of these cards has an action written on it. Some of the actions are things that God would want us to do. But some of the actions are things that are not what God wants us to do. I would like you to sort the cards into two piles, based on whether the action is something God would like us to do or not.
- Have the children work together to sort the cards, encouraging readers to help nonreaders. If you have a large class, divide the class into small groups and give each group some cards to sort.
- After the cards have been sorted, read through the cards together. Have the children share how they chose which cards to put in each stack.

## Prepare

- ✓ Provide index cards.
- ✓ On each index card, write an action such as: going to church, being a good sport, being a good listener, making new friends, praying, being unkind, not sharing toys, taking someone else's money, and so forth. Make the cards a mix of positive actions and not-so-positive actions. Write enough cards so you will have at least three cards per child.
- ✓ Before class, hide the index cards around the room.

# Large Group

Bring all the children together to experience the Bible story. Use a bell to alert the children to the large group time.

## Prepare

- ✓ Photocopy Trouble Following the Rules at the end of this lesson for each child to take home.
- ✓ Recruit a confident reader or another adult to help you tell the Bible story.

## Prepare

- ✓ Write the Bible verse on a marker board or a piece of mural paper and place it where it can easily be seen. ("You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your mind, and with all your strength." Mark 12:30)
- ✓ Write a large *B*, *H*, *M*, and *S* on separate pieces of paper. On another sheet of paper, write the word *All*.

## The Israelites and the Golden calf

- **Say:** You may have guessed from the activities you have done this morning that today we are talking about putting God first in our lives. Our Bible story today is from the Old Testament. It tells us about a time when the Israelites forgot to put God first in their lives.
- Read the Bible story from Trouble Following the Rules (p. 17). Have a confident reader read the sections of the story printed in bold.
- **Ask:** What did the Israelites do when they forgot to put God first in their lives? (They made an idol and began to worship other gods.)
- **Say:** When we put God first in our lives, it helps us keep a relationship with God and helps us remember to live as God wants us to live.

## The Greatest Commandment

- **Say:** Remember that our Bible story was from the Old Testament, which is where we find stories about things that happened long before Jesus was born. Our Bible verse for today is from the New Testament and tells us what Jesus called the greatest commandment.
- Invite the children to read the Bible verse with you.
- **Say:** You might notice that this commandment teaches the same message we heard from our Bible story—to put God first in our lives. Let's play a game to help us learn our Bible verse. I am going to hold up some letters. When I hold up an *H*, you will say, "Love God with all your heart!" When I hold up a *B*, you will say, "Love God with all your being!" When I hold up an *S*, you will say, "Love God with all your strength!" When I hold up an *M*, you will say, "Love God with all your mind!" And when I hold up the word *All*, you will say the entire Bible verse. You will need to pay attention to know what to say.
- Hold up the pieces of paper and encourage the children to respond appropriately, holding up each letter at least twice.

# Let's Put God First

- **Say:** We have talked about putting God first. Our Bible verse tells us to love God with all our heart, being, mind, and soul. Let's spend some time talking about what it means to put God first and what our lives are like when God is number one.
- **Say:** Loving God with all our heart means that we are faithful to God.
- **Ask:** How would you finish the following sentence?
  - **Because I love God with all my heart, I will...**
- Invite children to share their responses.
- Read each of the following statements, and then invite children to finish each sentence starter.
- Loving God with all our being means remembering God is present with us all the time.
  - **Because I love God with all my being, I will...**
- Loving God with all our mind means we think about God and how God wants us to live.
  - **Because I love God with all my mind, I will...**
- Loving God with all our strength means serving God with our actions.
  - **Because I love God with all my strength, I will...**
- **Say:** You have shared many great ideas for putting God first in our lives. Let's all remember that God is number one.
- Dismiss children to their small groups.

## Prepare

✓ Write the following sentence starter on a marker board or a piece of mural paper: Because I love God with all my \_\_\_\_\_, I will...

# Small Groups

Divide the children into small groups. You may organize the groups around age levels or around readers and non-readers. Keep the groups small, with a maximum of ten children in each group. You may need to have more than one group of each age level.

## Prepare

- ✓ Photocopy Bible Verse Cards for each child.
- ✓ Provide paper, pencil, construction paper, scissors, crayons, markers, glue sticks, and scissors.
- ✓ Cut a paper heart out of red construction paper.

## Younger Children (Ages five through seven)

- **Ask:** How do you spend your time? In a normal week, what are all of the things you spend time doing?
- Give children an opportunity to respond. As the children respond, write down their answers on a piece of paper.
- Show the children the paper with all their answers on it.
- **Say:** That's a lot of different things that you do in a week!
- **Ask:** Which of these activities help you think about God or feel closer to God? During which of these activities is God present? (All of them)
- **Say:** We spend our time doing many different things. Some of our activities specifically make us think about God, but we know God is always with us.
- **Ask:** Where do we want God to be in our lives? (First)
- **Say:** Our Bible verse today reminds us to focus on God and live the way God wants us to. You are going to make a poster that will remind you of the instructions in today's Bible verse.
- Give each child a copy of Bible Verse Cards.
- Encourage each child to cut out his or her cards.
- Have each child glue his or her cards on a piece of construction paper in the following order: You Must Love God With All Your Heart Being Mind and Strength.
- Invite each child to decorate her or his poster with crayons, markers, and stickers.
- **Say:** When you take your poster home, hang it where you will see it often so it can remind you to keep God first in your life.

- Have the children sit in a circle.
- Show the children the paper heart.
- **Say:** We are going to pass this heart around the circle. When you have the heart, tell us one thing you are going to do this week because you love God. For example, maybe because you love God you are going to try to remember to say a prayer of thanks before every meal, or maybe you are going to smile at everyone you meet, or maybe you are going to be a good sport at your soccer game. There are many ways to show our love for God.
- Pass the heart around the circle, giving each child an opportunity to share.
- **Pray:** God, thank you for loving us. We love you with all our heart, being, mind, and strength. Help us to keep you number one in our lives. Amen.

## older children (Ages eight to eleven)

- Have the children look up Mark 12:30 in their Bibles.
- **Ask:** Is Mark in the Old Testament or New Testament? (New Testament) What does that tell us about when the events in Mark happened? (The New Testament tells us the stories about Jesus' birth and ministry, so things we read in the New Testament happened after Jesus was born.)
- Invite a child to read Mark 12:30 to the group.
- **Ask:** In this passage, who is saying these words that are our Bible verse for today? (Jesus)
- Have the children look up Deuteronomy 6:5 in their Bibles.
- **Ask:** Is Deuteronomy in the Old Testament or the New Testament? (Old Testament) What does this tell us about when the events in Deuteronomy happened? (Stories we read about in the Old Testament happened before Jesus was born.)
- Invite a child to read Deuteronomy 6:5 to the group.
- **Ask:** What do you notice about these two verses? (They are similar.)

## Prepare

✓ Photocopy the Bible Verse Cards onto cardstock for each child. You will need two pages for each child. You may use the game cards used earlier in the lesson for the God First Matching Game.

✓ Provide Bibles, ribbon, crayons, markers, scissors, glue, and rulers.

- **Say:** Jesus grew up studying the Torah, what we now know as the first five books of the Old Testament.
- Have a child read Deuteronomy 6:6-9 to the group.
- **Ask:** What does this verse instruct people to do? (Repeat these words often. Teach them to your children. Tie them on your hand. Write them on your door frame.) What do you think was the purpose of these instructions? (To encourage people to remember these words) Why do you think these reminders were necessary? (The Israelites sometimes forgot to put God first.)
- **Say:** Even though we want to keep God first in our lives, sometimes we let other things in our lives distract us from what God wants us to do. This can happen when we get busy and forget to spend time praying or doing other things God wants us to do.
- **Ask:** What things in your life might take your mind off of God? (School activities, shopping, social media, and so forth)
- **Say:** None of these things are bad, but we need to remember that God is number one in our lives. Today we are going to make a ribbon hanging that you can take home and put in a place where you will see it often. It will help you remember the instructions in today's Bible verse.
- Give each child two copies of Bible Verse Cards or two sets of cards used in the matching game earlier in the lesson. If necessary, have the children cut out their cards. Have each child measure and cut a piece of ribbon approximately four feet long.
- Have each child tie a loop in one end of the ribbon. This will be the top of the ribbon hanger.
- Have each child glue both of the *You* cards together back-to-back with the ribbon in between the cards. The cards should be positioned just below the hanging loop of the ribbon.
- Have each child continue to glue the word cards back-to-back with the ribbon in between the cards. The words should be glued on the ribbon in the following order: You Must Love God With All Your Heart Being Mind and Strength. Encourage the children to decorate their cards with crayons and markers.
- **Say:** When you take your ribbon hanger home, hang it where it will remind you to put God first in your life.
- **Pray:** God, we love you, and we want to keep you number one in our lives. Help us to love you with our heart, being, mind, and strength. And help us focus on living as you want us to live. Amen.

# Trouble Following the Rules

Based on Exodus 20:1-7 and 32:1-24.

After God rescued the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, God gave them some rules to follow, rules that are still important to follow today.

**We call those rules the Ten Commandments.**

The first three commandments are about God. Rule number one: You must have no other gods before me.

**In other words, there's only one God, and God has done awesome things.**

Rule number two: Do not make an idol for yourself. Do not bow down or worship idols.

**In other words: Make God important in your life—more important than anything else.**

Rule number three: Do not use the Lord your God's name as if it has no significance.

**In other words: God's name is special. Don't say God's name unless you are talking to God or about God.**

Right after God rescued the Israelites from slavery they were very grateful. Moses, whom God had sent to lead the Israelites from Egypt, and his sister, Miriam, led the people in praising and singing to God.

**The people sang about the wonderful things God had done.**

Unfortunately, the Israelites must have had a short memory, because it didn't take them long to get into trouble. Here's what happened. Moses went up on a mountain to talk to God. He was gone for many days, and the people became restless. They thought Moses was never coming back, so they went to Moses' brother Aaron and asked him to make them gods to lead them.

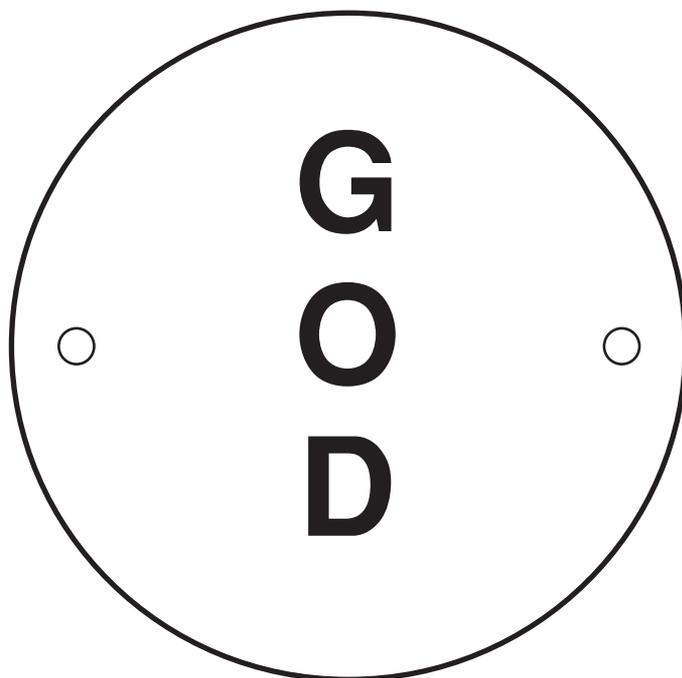
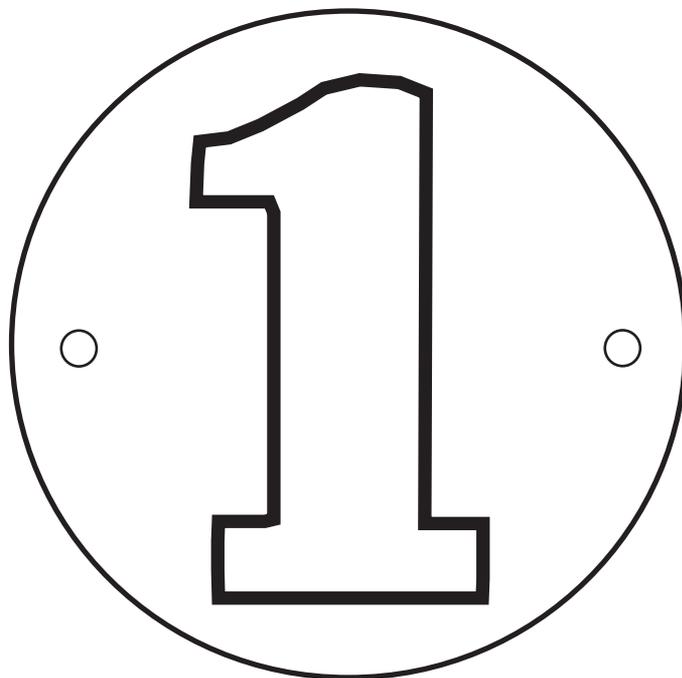
**Uh-oh, what happened to following rule number one—no other gods?**

Exactly. Aaron went along with the people's request. He told the people to bring him all of their gold jewelry. Then he melted the gold and formed it into a statue of a calf. He showed it to the people and said, "Here is your god!" The people bowed down to the golden calf and began to worship it.

**Uh-oh, what happened to following rules number two and three—no idols and God's name is special?**

Apparently, the Israelites had forgotten the rules. God was not happy! Moses was not happy either. Fortunately, God gave the Israelites another chance. Moses destroyed the golden calf and reminded the people there is only one God.

# Number One Spinner



# Bible Verse Cards

You	Must	Love
God	With	All
Your	Heart	Being
Mind	And	Strength