



Unit .06

Session .01

An Image of Idolatry

Scripture



Exodus 32:1-14

1 When the people saw that Moses delayed in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said to him, “Come, make gods for us who will go before us because this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt—we don’t know what has happened to him!” **2** Aaron replied to them, “Take off the gold rings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters and bring them to me.” **3** So all the people took off the gold rings that were on their ears and brought them to Aaron. **4** He took the gold from them, fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made it into an image of a calf. Then they said, “Israel, these are your gods, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!” **5** When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of it and made an announcement: “There will be a festival to the LORD tomorrow.” **6** Early the next morning they arose, offered burnt offerings, and presented fellowship offerings. The people sat down to eat and drink, and got up to party. **7** The LORD spoke to Moses: “Go down at once! For your people you brought up from the land of Egypt have acted corruptly. **8** They have quickly turned from the way I commanded them; they have made for

themselves an image of a calf. They have bowed down to it, sacrificed to it, and said, ‘Israel, these are your gods, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.’” **9** The LORD also said to Moses: “I have seen this people, and they are indeed a stiff-necked people. **10** Now leave me alone, so that my anger can burn against them and I can destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation.” **11** But Moses sought the favor of the LORD his God: “LORD, why does your anger burn against your people you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and a strong hand? **12** Why should the Egyptians say, ‘He brought them out with an evil intent to kill them in the mountains and eliminate them from the face of the earth’? Turn from your fierce anger and relent concerning this disaster planned for your people. **13** Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Israel—you swore to them by yourself and declared, ‘I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of the sky and will give your offspring all this land that I have promised, and they will inherit it forever.’” **14** So the LORD relented concerning the disaster he had said he would bring on his people.

What are some objects of worship for people today?

What do you think of when you hear the word *idol*? In what ways do we still deal with idols today?



99 Essential Doctrines

Guilt and Shame

Guilt refers to the objective status of someone being found guilty for a wrong committed as well as the incurring of punishment that comes with it (Matt. 5:21-22; Jas. 2:10). Shame is the emotional pain that comes from sinful actions. Scripture teaches that human beings are guilty in an objective sense and also feel the weight of shame in a subjective sense.

Main Point

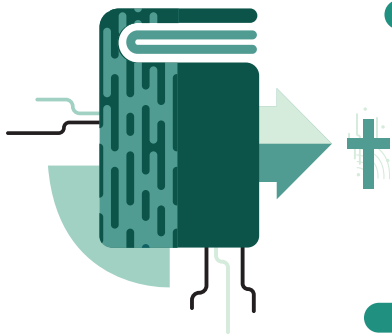
Idolatry happens when we worship something or someone else besides God.

Why do you think God was angry with the people?

What do you expect to satisfy you? What do you do when it fails to truly satisfy?

When have you asked someone to pray for you? How did it encourage you to know someone was making requests to God on your behalf?

Who will you pray for who needs salvation? How will you point them to Jesus this week?



Christ Connection

When the children of Israel sinned, they needed a mediator (Moses) to intercede on their behalf. Jesus Christ is the perfect Mediator between God and sinful humanity, and He faithfully intercedes on behalf of His people.



Head

How are we like the Israelites in this account?

Why is it better to trust in God rather than in some thing or person?



Heart

How does idolatry in our hearts and lives negatively affect our relationships with others and our relationship with God?

What are some heart idols you have faced this past week? Month? Year?

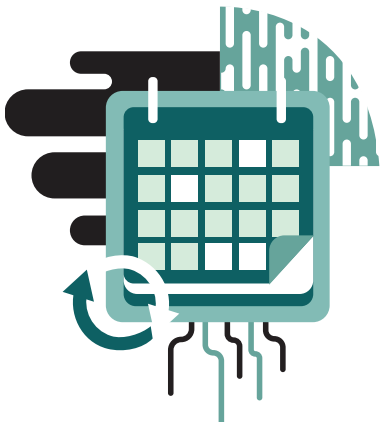


Hands

What can we learn from Moses' intercession on behalf of the people?

Who can you fervently pray for this week?

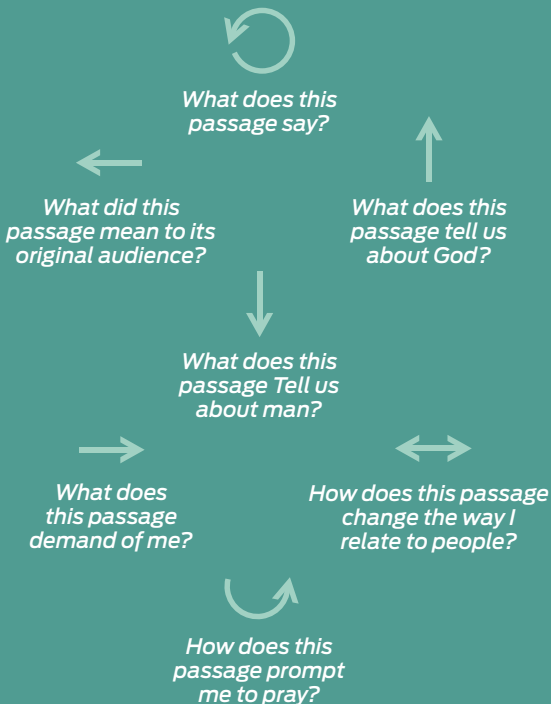
Daily Devotions



Day 1

Exodus 32:1-6

The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Moses went up the mountain to meet with God. We aren't told how much time had passed, but notice how the people felt about how long he had been gone: to them Moses "delayed" in coming down. This drove them to feel abandoned by Moses and more importantly, God, and to ask Aaron to make an idol.

But notice God's perspective of how long it had been. Later, God told Moses that the people had "quickly" turned away from Him (v. 8). Apparently, the Israelites did not take long to violate the commands they swore to uphold. They acted hastily in calling for Aaron to fashion an idol to worship.

Like the Israelites, our perception of time can mislead us, especially when it feels as if God is not paying attention or has abandoned us. Like the Israelites, we can act hastily and turn from God. This is when we need to remember God is never far off, and He always works in His perfect timing, even if it does not feel that way.

How have you seen the perfection of God's timing?

Exodus 32:7-10

The children of Israel did not just see time differently than God did, they also saw His presence differently. While Moses was up the mountain meeting with God, the Israelites concluded that God was absent and all of His focus was on top of the mountain while they were neglected at its base. They failed to understand that God is omnipresent (not contained in one place) and that He is omniscient (knows and is fully aware of all).

They pleaded with Aaron to make a god they could see, touch, and worship. They thought God was distant from them and they wanted to make a god that would always be present. Notice God's awareness to what happened though. God told Moses exactly what the people did—even what they said. God was not absent. He was not distracted.

The same God who was ever-present with Israel in the wilderness, the same God who was all-knowing of all Israel did, is with us as well. He is just as aware of our lives too. This is a great comfort for us; it reminds us we are never alone and nothing happens to us apart from God's full knowledge and His sovereign hand.

Does God's presence in and awareness of your life encourage you or concern you? Why?

Exodus 32:11-14

God told Moses to stand back so He could wipe the rebellious Israelites off the face of the earth, and He would start a new nation with Moses. This may have been God's way of inviting Moses to speak up for the people. If it was, Moses didn't miss the cue. Although the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and were difficult, Moses stepped forward as the mediator they needed. But don't just marvel in what Moses did, look at how he did it.

Notice that as Moses pleaded for the people, his argument for sparing the people was comprised of three main points: they were God's people, God would not be glorified if He were to wipe them out, and God had made promises to this people. Not a single argument was made on behalf of the people.

So it is with the gospel. Christ is our mediator—a greater One—and He makes constant appeal to the Father on our behalf. Not based on what we have done or might do, but on what He has done and the righteousness He has given us.

How might you be prone to try to rest in your work instead of Christ's work on your behalf? Why?

Exodus 32:15-20

Moses pleaded for the people and God relented in bringing the disaster upon the people. But notice what happened when Moses arrived at the camp. Hearing God explain what the Israelites had done was one thing, but hearing it and seeing it was another. Witnessing how the Israelites had rebelled against God and how they had scorned Him was too much for Moses. He was filled with a righteous indignation that prompted him to act. He burned the golden calf, ground it into a powder, spread it over water, and made the people drink it.

How we view Moses' actions here tells us quite a bit about our view of God. If we see Moses as over-reacting, we might want to pause and consider if we appreciate the gravity of this sin and the holiness of the One it was against. Sin is never to be taken lightly—even by those of us who are in Christ. Yes, all our sin is forgiven, but even the “smallest” sin is still an act of open rebellion against God and dishonors Him.

**How do you tend to view sin?
How does the gospel frame
that perspective?**

Exodus 32:21-35

We have to appreciate Aaron's response to Moses' question of what happened. “It was the people. They made me do it. When I threw the gold into the fire, this calf just happened to pop out!” Yes, we have to appreciate Aaron's response, not because it is admirable in any way, but because we tend to respond the same way to sin.

We deflect. We minimize. We rationalize. We are just like Aaron, and just like our ancient ancestors Adam and Eve in Eden. Our sin keeps us from even owning up to our sin. That is the downward cycle of our hearts and minds.

Thankfully, God has not left us in our depravity. Instead, He has given us new hearts and He is in the process of changing our thinking, to see our sin as He sees it, not as how we prefer to see it.

Christians can make the mistake of languishing in our sin and failing to grasp grace. We can forget that Christ paid for all our sins. At the same time, we are just as prone, if not more so, to view our sin too lightly. We can abuse grace. We want to avoid both extremes and instead see our sin as forgiven, yes, but it still carries consequences for us and those around us.

**What is your perspective of your sin?
Do you tend to minimize it or sink
into it?**