

Small Group Guide: The Golden Calf - Idolatry and Impatience

Sermon Date: Based on Exodus 32

Main Theme: Recognizing and removing modern idols that replace our devotion to God

Opening Prayer & Icebreaker (10 minutes)

Icebreaker Question:

Share about a time when you had to wait for something important. How did you handle the waiting period?

Key Scripture Passages

- **Exodus 32:1-6** - The Golden Calf incident
- **Psalms 106:19-20** - Exchanging glory for an image
- **Romans 1:22-23** - Trading God's glory for created things
- **Hebrews 7:25** - Christ our intercessor

Summary of Main Points

1. **Impatience manufactures what faith would have received**
2. **False leadership follows the crowd instead of the call**
3. **Where sin abounds, the intercessor stands**

Discussion Questions

Part 1: Recognizing Our Golden Calves (20 minutes)

1. **The pastor mentioned that the golden calf wasn't a rejection of God, but a replacement of God.** What's the difference, and why is that distinction important?

2. **Read Psalm 106:19-20 together.** The Israelites "exchanged their glory" for an image. What does it mean to exchange the glory God has given us for something else?
3. **The sermon referenced the book "Gods at War," which claims that every struggle in our life stems from idolatry.** Do you agree or disagree? Why?
4. **Modern golden calves are made of "comfort, certainty, approval, and control."** Which of these do you struggle with most? Can you identify a specific area in your life where one of these has become an idol?

Part 2: The Danger of Impatience (15 minutes)

5. **The Israelites couldn't wait 40 days for Moses to return.** When have you taken matters into your own hands because God seemed to be taking too long? What was the result?
6. **The pastor used the illustration of cutting up the Bible based on what we like or don't like.** In what ways do we subtly do this today —creating a "God" that makes us comfortable rather than accepting who He truly is?
7. **John Piper said: "Idolatry is not just a failure to obey God. It is setting of the whole heart on something besides God."** What's the difference between disobeying God and making an idol? Can you give an example?

Part 3: Leadership and Accountability (15 minutes)

8. **Aaron's failure was particularly devastating because he was the leader.** Why do you think Aaron gave in to the pressure of the crowd instead of standing firm?
9. **The pastor said: "Leaders who will not name their own failures cannot lead others to repentance."** How does this principle apply to us, even if we're not in official leadership positions?
10. **Aaron blamed the people and even claimed the calf just "came out" of the fire.** When do you find yourself making excuses rather than taking accountability for your choices?

Part 4: Christ Our Intercessor (15 minutes)

11. **Moses stood in the gap between a holy God and guilty people.** How does this foreshadow what Christ has done for us?

- 12. Read Hebrews 7:25 together.** What does it mean that Jesus "always lives to make intercession" for us? How should this truth affect our daily lives?
- 13. Moses cried out: "Whoever is on the Lord's side, come."** What does being "on the Lord's side" look like practically in your life right now?

Key Takeaways

- **Impatience reveals our true heart.** When God seems slow or silent, we're tempted to create our own solutions rather than trust Him.
- **Modern idols are rarely obvious.** They're often good things (career, family, comfort, control) that we've elevated above God.
- **We exchange God's glory when we remake Him in our image.** Picking and choosing what we like about God creates a false god.
- **True leaders take accountability.** They don't blame circumstances or other people for their failures.
- **Jesus is our perfect intercessor.** While we were yet sinners, He died for us and continues to intercede for us.

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge:

Personal Inventory:

Take 30 minutes this week in quiet prayer asking God: "Search me and know my heart. Show me if there are any idols in my life." Write down what He reveals.

Accountability:

Share one specific idol you identified with a trusted friend or accountability partner. Ask them to check in with you weekly about it.

Scripture Meditation:

Memorize Psalm 106:19-20 or Hebrews 7:25. Reflect on what it means to exchange glory or to have Christ interceding for you.

Practical Steps:

- Identify one area where you've been impatient with God. Commit to prayer instead of action for the next two weeks.
- Examine your calendar and bank statement. What do they reveal about your true priorities?
- If you've been "cutting out" parts of Scripture you don't like, commit to reading those difficult passages with an open heart.

Reflection Questions for Personal Journaling

1. What "golden calf" has God revealed in my life through this sermon?
2. Where am I trying to make God more comfortable and controllable rather than accepting Him as He truly is?
3. In what area of my life am I being impatient with God's timing?
4. How does knowing Jesus intercedes for me change how I view my struggles and failures?
5. What would it look like for me to answer Moses' call: "Whoever is on the Lord's side, come"?

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Prayer Focus:

- Confession of any idols God has revealed
- Thanksgiving for Christ as our intercessor
- Commitment to wait on God's timing
- Request for courage to take accountability for our choices

Suggested Prayer:

"Father, search our hearts and reveal the golden calves we've created. Forgive us for exchanging Your glory for things we can control. Thank You that Jesus stands in the gap for us, interceding when we fail. Give us the faith to wait on Your timing and the courage to stand on Your side. In Jesus' name, amen."

Looking Ahead

Next week, be prepared to share:

- One thing God revealed to you about idols in your life

- One step you took to remove that idol or put God back in His rightful place
- How the truth of Christ's intercession impacted your week

Additional Resources

- Book recommendation: *Gods at War* by Kyle Idleman
- Consider reading Exodus 33-34 to see how God responds after the golden calf incident
- Reflect on how the building of the Tabernacle (which follows this incident) shows God's desire to dwell with His people despite their failures