

Exodus
The Truth About Golden Calves- Week #15
Small Group Notes
November 12 and 15

Main Point: Golden calves rob our hearts from worshiping the one true God.

Introduction:

What does it mean to idolize someone? What does that look like?

Have you ever idolized anyone in your life? If so, who and why?

Sometimes, we use the word “idol” to mean someone we look up to or whose behavior we wish to imitate. In the sermon an idol is understood to be “God on our own terms.” Some people idolize their parents, or perhaps a movie star, or maybe even one of their sports heroes. We begin to draw closer to God when we learn how to remove the “golden calves” in our lives. The lessons that we begin to learn is the truth about “golden calves.”

To begin, read Exodus 32:1-6.

Discuss:

1. Golden Calves Don't Make you Wait: Read Exodus 32:1

- Life's biggest mistakes are often made in the waiting room. Read Hebrews 11:1.

Explain: When the people saw that Moses delayed in coming down presents the situation from the viewpoint of the people. The preceding verses about the Lord having finished speaking and having given Moses the tablets, plus 24:14,18, indicates that their notion was mistaken. The people had allowed their waiting to impact their faith and understanding of who God was!

Ask: How can we be like the Israelites in waiting? What are things that we can question about God when we are forced to wait?

Why is your waiting a time to let God develop your faith?

2. Golden Calves fade fast. Read Exodus 32:2-4.

Explain: The people of Israel were not walking by faith. They doubted that Moses would return. They wanted something tangible to look at like the rest of the nations, so they wanted an idol. They wanted leadership, someone to follow, and since Moses was gone and they didn't understand who God is, they demanded an idol. The problem with idols is that they misrepresent God. Idols inevitably twist God into our own images and projections of what we want Him to be like—not for who He truly is.

Ask: Has there been a time when you have idolized an object or tradition that celebrated God, instead of God Himself? Explain.

Why are we quick to accept idols in our lives? Why are idols false means of satisfactions? What is an idol you have seen to fade fast?

3. Golden Calves can be easily spiritualized. Read Exodus 32:5-6.

- Recognizing Calf Worship:
 - o Influenced way more by the crowd than the Word!
 - o Corporate gatherings don't lead to individual growth!
 - o Desire the things of God, just not the presence of God!
- Live as though God is blind to your sin. Read Exodus 32:7-8.

Explain: The scariest thing about this incident of idol worship is that the people pretended, or thought, that they were actually worshiping the one true God who had delivered them out of Egypt. This should serve as a cautionary reminder of how easily we can be led astray into false worship, and how quickly we can abandon God for an image of God that we have created ourselves.

Ask: It didn't take much for the people of Israel to be led away into sin. Are we more resistant to idol worship than they were? What do our idols look like today?

When do you find you are most likely to create an idol? What are good things that we can often turn into idols (children, our jobs, our time, our money)?

4. Golden Calves can't pay the price! Read Exodus 32:30-32.

- A substitute moves people from a place of judgment to a place of mercy with God!

Explain: Once Moses came down the mountain and saw the idol with his own eyes and how the people were behaving, he was livid. He smashed the idol, ground it into powder, and forced the people to drink it. Moses let the people know, quite emphatically, that idol worship was not tolerated by God. We don't know exactly why Moses had the Israelites "drink their sin," but it is likely that the intent was to help the Israelites wake up to the reality of their sin and its results.

Ask: How do you see the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross in this passage?

How can we as a small group help one another recognize the idols in our own lives and fight against them?