

Youth Sabbath School Ideas for May 20, 2023

Lesson Plan 2: “Impatience” Relational Bible Study

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Exodus 32:1-35

LEADER’S NOTE

For a Relational Bible Study (RBS) you’ll want to get into the Scripture passage and encourage the youth to imagine participating in the story while it’s happening. Then you will be able to better apply it to your own situation today.

You will need to ask God for the Holy Spirit to be present as your small group discusses the questions (no more than 3-6 people in a group is recommended). Start with the opening question. It is a personal question and the answer is unique for each individual. There is no right answer and nobody is an expert here, so don’t be surprised when you hear different responses. You are depending on the Holy Spirit to be present and to speak through your group. Say what God prompts you to say, and listen to what others share.

Take turns reading the chapter out loud. Follow that with giving the students some time to individually mark their responses to the questions (a PDF version of the handout is available as a download). This gives each person a starting point for responding when you start to share as a group. Next, begin the discussion by asking the students to share what they marked and why on each question as you work your way through. Feel free to take more time on some questions than others as discussion warrants.

Encourage each person in the group to apply what is discussed to their personal lives and to share with the group what they believe God wants them to do. Then ask them to pray that God will help each of them to follow through in doing so. Remind them to expect that God will show them ways to live out the message of this passage in the coming week, and that they are free to ask others in the group to help hold them accountable.

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OVERVIEW

The people of God were in the wilderness, and for a pack who had witnessed some of God’s greatest miracles to date, they sure were feisty! The people of Israel were suspiciously fast at forgetting who provided those miracles for them, becoming highly impatient with Moses (and by extension, God) when they thought Moses wasn’t going to return. Soon this impatience turned into a lack of faith. With Moses’ disappearance into the cloud on top of Mount Sinai, his older brother, Aaron, served as the fill-in leader. But as the people became impatient, so did Aaron.

When the mob pushed some more, asking for Aaron to make them gods, Aaron complied. We may gasp at the thought of making an idol for others to worship, but it happens all the time today. Consider how many different things people worship, whether it's in sports, music, movies, or other influencers. "Make us gods! (And we will worship.)"

Our passage today is Exodus 32. The 35 verses tell the familiar story. As you read it, note items that you may have forgotten or that never stuck with you previously. And be ready to discuss this by answering the questions on your own first, and then joining the group discussion in your Youth Sabbath School.

Impatience

On a scale of 1-10, from patient to impatient, what number are you?

Read Exodus 32:1-35.

When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, "Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him."

² Aaron answered them, "Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me." ³ So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. ⁴ He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, "These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt."

⁵ When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced, "Tomorrow there will be a festival to the Lord." ⁶ So the next day the people rose early and sacrificed burnt offerings and presented fellowship offerings. Afterward they sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.

⁷ Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt. ⁸ They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. They have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said, 'These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.'

⁹ "I have seen these people," the Lord said to Moses, "and they are a stiff-necked people.

¹⁰ Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation."

¹¹ But Moses sought the favor of the Lord his God. "Lord," he said, "why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand?"

¹² Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth'? Turn from your fierce anger; relent and do not bring disaster on your people. ¹³ Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self: 'I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever.' " ¹⁴ Then the Lord relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.

¹⁵ Moses turned and went down the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands. They were inscribed on both sides, front and back. ¹⁶ The tablets were the work of God; the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets.

¹⁷ When Joshua heard the noise of the people shouting, he said to Moses, "There is the sound of war in the camp."

¹⁸ Moses replied: "It is not the sound of victory, it is not the sound of defeat; it is the sound of singing that I hear."

¹⁹ When Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain.

²⁰ And he took the calf the people had made and burned it in the fire; then he ground it to powder, scattered it on the water and made the Israelites drink it.

²¹ He said to Aaron, "What did these people do to you, that you led them into such great sin?"

²² "Do not be angry, my lord," Aaron answered. "You know how prone these people are to evil.

²³ They said to me, 'Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him.' ²⁴ So I told them, 'Whoever has any gold jewelry, take it off.' Then they gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!"

²⁵ Moses saw that the people were running wild and that Aaron had let them get out of control and so become a laughingstock to their enemies. ²⁶ So he stood at the entrance to the camp and said, "Whoever is for the Lord, come to me." And all the Levites rallied to him.

²⁷ Then he said to them, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'Each man strap a sword to his side. Go back and forth through the camp from one end to the other, each killing his brother and friend and neighbor.' "

²⁸ The Levites did as Moses commanded, and that day about three thousand of the people died.

²⁹ Then Moses said, "You have been set apart to the Lord today, for you were against your own sons and brothers, and he has blessed you this day."

³⁰The next day Moses said to the people, “You have committed a great sin. But now I will go up to the Lord; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.”

³¹So Moses went back to the Lord and said, “Oh, what a great sin these people have committed! They have made themselves gods of gold. ³²But now, please forgive their sin—but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written.”

³³The Lord replied to Moses, “Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book. ³⁴Now go, lead the people to the place I spoke of, and my angel will go before you. However, when the time comes for me to punish, I will punish them for their sin.”

³⁵And the Lord struck the people with a plague because of what they did with the calf Aaron had made.

1. Why did the Israelites ask Aaron to make them some gods?
 - A. Moses had been gone more than a month, so they got impatient.
 - B. Yahweh had gone silent since speaking the 10 commandments.
 - C. It’s always nice to have a god you can see and touch.
 - D. Aaron was a skilled craftsman, especially with gold.
 - E. The Israelites remained clueless about how to worship Yahweh.
 - F. The people knew Aaron would give in to their demands.
 - G. It’s easier to worship a god of your own making.
 - H. The Israelites had no assurance Moses would return.
 - I. Other.

2. Why did the Israelites worship the golden calf like pagans?
 - A. Pagans were their only role models.
 - B. They didn’t yet have a sanctuary for Yahweh.
 - C. Aaron made them do it.
 - D. Aaron planned a religious festival since he was the religious leader.
 - E. They worshiped Yahweh; the golden calf just represented Yahweh.
 - F. Humans are made to worship, and they were feeling the urge.
 - G. The highly sensual form of pagan worship seemed attractive.
 - H. The golden calf was beautiful and awe-inspiring.
 - I. Other.

3. What was God’s reaction when the Israelites worshiped the golden calf?
 - A. Since I’m so patient, I’m not troubled by this at all.
 - B. I’ve lost my patience now.
 - C. No problem; I completely understand.
 - D. Let’s start over Moses—just you and Me.
 - E. I am so done with these people.

- F. Let's repeat those 10 commandments, starting with the first one.
- G. This calls for a punishment—a plague.
- H. I'm starting over, but this time with the Egyptians.
- I. Other.

4. If you were Moses, what response would you have given to Yahweh?

- A. I'm with You.
- B. You're wrong, I'm sure the Israelites wouldn't worship a golden calf.
- C. Show a little more patience.
- D. Yahweh, you need to finish getting these people to Canaan.
- E. Stop being so impatient!
- F. You promised me You would take them to the Promised Land.
- G. You made promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- H. Other.

5. If you were Moses, what response would you have given the Israelites?

- A. Shame on you!
- B. Choose ye this day whom you will serve.
- C. Follow me, not Aaron.
- D. A golden calf—really?!
- E. Smash the 10 commandments God had inscribed.
- F. Destroy the golden calf.
- G. I don't think you will ever be accepted by Yahweh after this.
- H. Other.

6. Why did Moses go back up the mountain to Yahweh?

- A. Get away from the people.
- B. God called him to return to the mountain.
- C. Repent on behalf of the Israelites.
- D. Determine who was more impatient—Yahweh or Moses.
- E. Intercede for the disobedient Israelites.
- F. Find out if the people would disobey again in Moses' absence.
- G. Affirm his identification with the Israelites.
- H. Other.

7. How can people give up on a God who has done so much for them?

8. Why didn't God give up on the Israelites? Why doesn't God give up on you?

Summary

How could the Israelites do that? After all that God had done for them, why did they resort to a golden calf—a god that Yahweh had dominated in the fifth plague on Egypt (Exodus 9:1-7)? And yet we know that story (and more) of how God’s people have turned to other gods around them. Often we choose a god we can see and touch over one that we can’t. Sometimes we want a god we can use as a good luck charm or maybe one we can tame so we can control it rather than submit to it. But God wants an intimate friendship with us—not simply to be used by us or for us to be used by Him. And when we know God, our response is intimacy and worship. But that requires some patience!

APPLICATION

If you’re already patient, this might seem easy to you. Are you able to share your patience with others? Here are a few ideas for you to put into practice this week as you apply the Scripture to your life. Use one of these, or adapt it, or come up with your own. But be sure you ask the Holy Spirit to live out God’s will through your life this week, starting with our passage in Exodus 32.

1. MAKE US GODS.

Who are today’s idols? It might depend on your age and where you live, but God wired us to worship so we’re always looking for idols of some type.

- Download the “Make Us Gods” handout and answer the questions.
- Refer back to this sometime during the week as a reminder of this week’s Relational Bible Study.

DOWNLOAD PDF HERE

2. PATIENT PEOPLE.

Some people are just more patient than others. Call it temperament if you’d like, but mellow, thoughtful, analytical types just take their time to make decisions and react. In contrast, some people are very quick, sharp, and decisive—no need to waste time by blaming it on patience. How about you? And do you expect others to have your same temperament? Do you actually appreciate your opposite who might balance things out for both of you?

- Check out the “Patient People” handout, or look at it online at <https://i.redd.it/mgwlm73xg5fz.jpg>.
- Do this during Sabbath School or afterward.
- Do it for yourself, circling the strengths and weaknesses you identify with in the various temperaments. You’ll probably tend to identify with one or two of these quadrants rather than all four.
- When you are done, have someone who knows you well do the same type of thing in assessing you (and you do it for them).
- Note that each temperament has both strengths and weaknesses.

- Then pray that God will accentuate your temperament strengths and enable you to restrict or remove your natural, temperament weaknesses.

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3. **GOD'S TIMING.**

One reason the Israelites grew impatient at the bottom of Mt. Sinai was because they weren't on God's timetable. How long are we supposed to wait? While God seems to have "all the time in the world!" that doesn't mean those of us who rarely live to 100 have so much time. So, we get impatient when God doesn't follow our timetable.

- Download the "God's Timing" handout and answer the three questions as they relate to the items on the bottom half of the sheet. There's room to add your own.
- You can start this during Youth Sabbath School, but be sure to refer back to it during the week.
- Then pray for God's timing, and patience for you to follow (and accept) God's timing.

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