

Accept No Substitutes

Word

Scripture Reference

Exodus 32:1-6

Discussion Questions

1. Anyone can be guilty of having an “idol” in his or her life. What kind of idols do you have in your life?
2. Have you ever felt tired of God or wished that He were someone different? Unfortunately, this was what the Israelites felt. They got somewhat tired of God and wished to have a different and “improved” god. The book of Exodus tells us about how the Israelites labored as slaves in Egypt and how God freed them and brought them out of Egypt. After freeing the Israelites from 400 years of slavery in Egypt, God revealed Himself to His people at Mt. Sinai, where He spoke to them and revealed His plans, expectations and will for them (Exodus 12-31). However, after only three months since their freedom, we see in chapter 32 that the people wanted to change God. What happened? What do you think caused this change? Why were the people looking for a substitute god?
3. Read Exodus 32:1-6. God’s Word gives us three warnings about accepting spiritual substitutes for God. First is that accepting spiritual substitutes begins with IMPATIENCE. What did the people complain about in verse 1? What did they demand Aaron to do? People want a god that they can push around to do what they want, when they want. But the God of the Bible is not someone whom you can control. He does things His way. He asks you to wait on Him and to trust Him. In your own walk with God, do you ever feel that God is moving too slowly, or that He’s too busy to answer your prayers? Have you ever felt that He doesn’t care what happens to you? What comes to your mind when you get impatient with Him? Because nobody can push God around, believers should be assured that they can definitely trust God. Discuss how this is true for you.
4. The second warning is that accepting spiritual substitutes grows from ignorance. The passage tells us that the Israelites had no idea what happened to Moses when he didn’t return for quite a while. These people had first-hand experience of how God works. They had seen His power in bringing them out of Egypt, yet their impatience showed how much they did not really know God. They did not make an effort to know Him better; hence, they started worshipping the golden calf. Discuss what other gods could deceive people to worship other gods besides the One True and Living God. How well do you know God? What kind of God do you come to worship? How is your worship of God affected by what you know about

Him? Share with the group.

5. Thirdly, accepting spiritual substitutes lead to infidelity. The people of God sacrificed burnt offerings and presented fellowship offerings to a golden calf, their chosen substitute god. Afterward they indulged in unrestrained merrymaking. They did what they wanted and became unfaithful to their true God. Is an idol limited to a carved object to which one bows? Discuss other manifestations of idols in people’s lives. How would having an idol lead you to unfaithfulness to God?
6. When you allow a person or an object to take your focus away from God, you are guilty of idolatry, and God hates idolatry because:
 - a. He knows that idolatry (or any form of addiction) is bad for you because it could dominate you. What are the different kinds of addictions that have been slaving people nowadays? Do you have an addiction that is taking you away from God?
 - b. He knows that idolatry disappoints because it promises more than it can deliver. He wants to protect you from that disappointment. How would you give up that “idol” in your life knowing that it will not only cause disappointments, but also will separate you from God?
 - c. He knows that idolatry can deform you. Man can be destroyed by idolatry or addiction. Discuss how a person can be deformed by their chosen idol.

Walk

Idolatry is very deceiving and it can destroy you. God wants to protect you from all these. When you worship the real and true God, the Bible promises that you will have joy (John 16:33). Because living for God is a daily transformation into His likeness, worship Him will develop and not destroy you. Ponder these things and allow the Holy Spirit to search your heart and find if there is anything there that has been a substitute idol in your life. How has it been affecting your life? Has this “idol” or addiction been dominating your life, disappointing you because it doesn’t give you real satisfaction, or started deforming your character? Ask the Lord to help you accept your sins and weaknesses. Tell Him that you are ready and willing to give your idols up in order to have real joy in your life. Claim deliverance and victory over this matter so that you can begin to develop into His likeness.

Worship & Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for being the God who is the Great I Am, the God who is in control, the God who saves, the God who protects, the God who provides. Forgive me for trying to find other things or other people to take Your place in my life. Forgive me for my impatience and unwillingness to wait for Your best. By the blood of Christ You have assured me victory over sin. By the power of the Holy Spirit You gave me the ability to resist sin and be patient in waiting for Your plans to come to fruition. Daily You prove that You are sovereign over all and that You are able, and for that I give You the highest praise. Bless me, Lord, as I live according to Your will. In Jesus’ name. Amen.