

EXODUS

Daily Devotions Week 14



DAY ONE

There's a German proverb that says: "In America, an hour is 40 minutes." There are many ways we could diagnose the frenetic, unable-to-wait-patiently lifestyle that pervades our culture. However, I think this proverb from a *different culture* speaks volumes about how our culture is perceived and might actually function.

Waiting is never fun. Whether it be in line at the grocery store, waiting for entrance into the Indiana State Fair, waiting for the start of a special event— we don't like waiting if we can help it.

It's interesting, though, that when our patience begins to wear thin, aspects of our personalities begin to leak out we try to hide – irritability, frustration, annoyance. Our bodies even begin to suffer side effects (albeit small) because of our impatience – increased heart rate, heightened blood pressure, or muscle tension. Being impatient usually doesn't do us any good – physically, emotionally, or spiritually.

Re-read Exodus 32:1.

Notice in this very first verse that it was impatience that led the people to forego their faithfulness to God and take matters into their own hands. Look at how the first part of verse one is translated differently:

NIV: "When the people saw that Moses **was so long** in coming down from the mountain..."

ESV: "When the people saw that Moses **delayed** to come down from the mountain..."

MSG: "When the people realized that Moses **was taking forever** in coming down off the mountain..."

It was the impatience of the Israelites that led them to idolatry. It was their impatience that led them to forsake the covenant they had just made with God only a few chapters earlier.

When we look at the life of Jesus, we don't see a hurried, anxious, or rushed man. We see a man that acted, but someone who also went through life in a composed manner. Jesus never seemed hurried. He never seemed impatient. He never seemed ran frenetically. It makes sense why patience is one of the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). As followers of Jesus, we are to be characterized by patience just like he was.

I've often wondered how much of Christian unfaithfulness occurs because we're simply too impatient. I've often wondered how different we are from the Israelites in Exodus 32.

What are some areas of your life you find yourself dealing with impatience? When was a time your impatience led to negative consequences?
In what ways have you experienced God's patience towards you?
What are ways for you to grow in patience?

DAY TWO

We don't want to just talk about following Jesus. We want to become more like him. We want to grow everyday into thinking, speaking, and acting just like him. Yesterday, we talked about how the people of God were led into idolatry because they were impatient. This is often an overlooked virtue in our culture.

Today, we're going to re-read Exodus 32:1-10 and find ways to practice being more patient.

Read Exodus 32:1.

Think of a time in the last week or two you felt impatient. Write your experience in the space below and describe the circumstances.

Why do you think your body's reaction to your experience was impatience?

What did you feel in your body when you were impatient (increased heart rate, anxiousness, irritability)?

As you go throughout your day today, note in the space below any time (truly, *every time*) you feel impatient.

Do you notice your impatience affecting your relationship with others? How do you think your impatience impacts your relationship with God?

DAY THREE

Read Exodus 32:1-10.

The famous theologian Thomas Aquinas once noted, “The infinite cannot be contained in the finite. God exists infinitely, and nothing finite can grasp him infinitely.”

God is ineffable. This means he is too great to be described or expressed in words or images. As Isaiah 40:28 states, “Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the Earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.”

In Exodus 32, the people of God fashion an idol in the form of a golden calf, and in a way, were trying to worship God they could understand. It's not that they ended up worshipping a whole other god... in a sense, they were trying to tame God. We especially see Israel trying to tame God in verse five when, after crafting their idol, the Israelites plan to offer a feast to the Lord.

However, as one commentator observes, “In Moses' day, the way you honored and respected whatever gods you followed was by making carvings or sculptures of them and then bowing down to what you had made. These were gods you could get your mind around. Moses is confronting people with an entirely new concept of what the true God is like. He is claiming that no statue or carving could ever capture this God, because this God has no shape or form.” Israel tried to make God like the other gods they were familiar with, but God is incomprehensible. He is completely “other” from us. He is quite literally indescribable.

In our day and age, we may not create carved images to do this to God, but sometimes we do it with our language. Many times, when we think about God, we think he is just like us but better. He's smarter, possesses more power, is more loving, etc. So, we think the *only* difference between us and God is simply *quantitative* – he just has *more* of the same qualities we have. But, the difference between us and God is not only *quantitative*, it's also *qualitative*. God is a whole other being none can compare to. He cannot be boiled down or reduced to an image. Our words cannot describe his immensity. He is infinite. We, and our thinking, are finite. We *cannot* domesticate God.

One way we often do this is when we compare God to our own fathers – be it good or bad. Rather, we must develop our understanding of God based upon his revelation in the holy Scriptures.

By using our language and comparing God to ourselves or people we know, we fashion God after *our* human likeness. Instead, we ought to fashion ourselves after *his* likeness. As the early church Father Tertullian once said, “[It is] palpably absurd of you to be placing human characteristics in God rather than divine ones in man, and clothing God in the likeness of man, instead of man in the image of God.”

In what ways do you think you domesticate God?

In what ways can we be sure to properly think and talk about God?

Why might it be harmful to talk about God in comparison to ourselves?

Why might it be beneficial to instead compare ourselves to God?

DAY FOUR

Read Exodus 32:1-10.

As the people of Israel attempt to domesticate God, they have to give up certain belongings. Re-read **Exodus 32:2-4**.

The people take off their gold items (that they had most likely plundered from the Egyptians when they were led out of Egypt) and hand them over to Aaron so he could create an idol for them to worship. Notice how everyone seems to be involved. Wives are giving up their jewelry, sons and daughters are contributing. The author of Exodus wants us to see that all of Israel is okay with domesticating God by making an idol.

In this text, we see the people of God sacrificing their gold and participating in idolatry, leading wrong relationship with their Creator. In Exodus 32:7, God's disposition towards his people changes. They are no longer his people, but rather Moses' people. God calls the people stiff-necked, like an ox that won't follow the commands of its owner and go to the right or the left because its neck is firmly pointed straight ahead. Because of their stiff-necks, Israel must now potentially face the wrath of God (Exodus 32:10).

All of this points to two often overlooked realities of idolatry:

1. Idols will always require you to sacrifice something.
2. Idols will ultimately lead you away from God.

When we think about idols we commonly encounter in our culture, they always require us to sacrifice something. If you worship work, you'll sacrifice time with family. If you worship power, you'll sacrifice friendships. If you worship materialism, you'll sacrifice contentment. The list goes on and on. And at the end of all of that, you'll never find true joy, fulfillment, or salvation.

What's interesting about the God of the Bible, is that instead of asking for you to sacrifice everything up front, he is the one who sacrifices himself first. Does God ask us to deny ourselves and surrender to him? Definitely. But he doesn't ask that of us until he first lays down his own life.

We see this in the life of Jesus, the Son of God, "Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!" (Philippians 2:6-8).

And, unlike sacrificing to idols that lead us away from God, in Jesus' sacrifice, we are brought into right relationship with the Father.

In what ways have you seen idolatry in your life cost you something?

What forms of idolatry are you most prone to?

Write a prayer to God describing your feelings when you think about him being so unlike the idols in our lives that require us to make the sacrifices first and that never bring fulfillment.

DAY FIVE

As we read in **Exodus 32** over the course of this week, the Israelites unintentionally disobeyed God and created an idol. All too often there are areas in our own lives we defy what God wants for us without realizing it. One practice to help us discern those areas in our lives is *Lectio Divina*, which simply means “divine reading.” It’s a practice of praying with Scripture, allowing God to speak through his word. There are five movements to the reading: *Silencio* (silence), *Lectio* (reading), *Meditatio* (meditation), *Oratio* (speech or response), *Contemplatio* (contemplate). These movements allow us to sit with a passage, so it can saturate our minds and hearts.

Let’s spend time in Exodus 32 one last time, but in a different way.

Silencio. As you begin, put yourself in the presence of God. Find a quiet space and allow your mind to be still. Offer yourself to God and invite him to speak through his word.

Lectio. Read **Exodus 32:1-10** out loud, slowly allowing the words to resonate and settle in your heart. Linger on the word or phrase that catches your attention and lights up for you. Sit with the word or phrase and savor it as a word of God for you. Write the word or phrase below:

Meditatio. Read the passage again and listen to where the word connects with your life right now. Enter into the scene in your imagination. Imagination is a God-given gift. Envision being in this story. What would it have been like to be an Israelite? What would it have been like to be in Aaron’s shoes? What sights do you see? What smells would you smell? What would you hear?

Oratio. Read the passage one more time, listening attentively. Has God addressed you in this Word and invited you to respond? Allow the Scripture to lead you into a prayer response. Don’t censor your thoughts or requests. Let them flow out spontaneously and freely before the Lord who loves you. Hold nothing back. Respond to God’s invitation to you.

Contemplatio. Deeply receive God’s word and rest in his presence and love. Give yourself some time to wait and be still before you reenter life as usual. How can you take this encounter with you throughout this day? Return to it and remember it all day long. Stay with God until you feel prompted to leave.