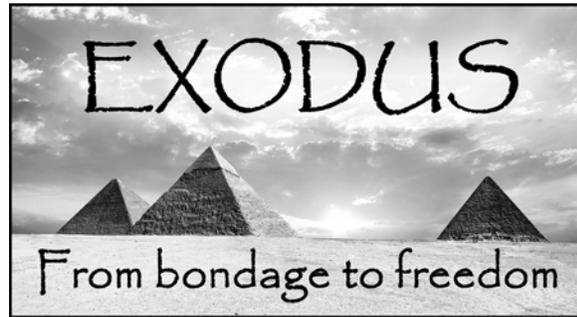


STUDY GUIDE

Week 4: Exodus 32

Relapse

October 9, 2016



Before you begin this study, ask the Holy Spirit to show you what God is saying in these scriptures.

Day 1: read Exodus 32: 1-6

1. In verse 1, what did the people “see”? How long was Moses on the mountain and what was he doing (Exodus 24: 15-18)? How did the Israelites respond to his long absence? Why did they respond this way? What other times did Moses go up to the mountain? (see Exodus 19:3-7; 19:20-25; 24:1-2, 9-18; and 31:18) Note who goes with him, when he goes alone, and what happens.
2. What did the Israelites want Aaron to make? Why? What do you think they were really searching for?
3. In verses 2-3, what did Aaron ask the people to do? Why do you think Aaron did this? What was Aaron’s leadership role among the Israelites?
4. In verses 4-6, what did Aaron do with the gold jewelry? Why do you think he made a calf? What was involved in their worship of the calf? Compare verses 4-6 with Exodus 20: 4-6. How does the golden calf violate God’s commandments?
5. What idols have you created? At what times in your life did this happen? Why do we create idols? How do we craft our own substitute God-presence?

Digging deeper: What do we know about idol worship in Israel?

Day 2: read Exodus 32: 7-14

1. What does God tell Moses in verses 7-8? Why do you think God responded this way?
2. Note what God called the people of Israel in verse 7. What does God call the Israelites in verse 9? Why did God call the Israelites a “stiff-necked people”? What does this mean? In what ways are you “stiff-necked”? Why? With what results or consequences?

3. In verse 10, what does God propose to do to the Israelites? Why would a loving God, who had rescued the Israelites from slavery, now burn with anger and want to destroy them? What does this tell us about God?
4. In verses 11-13, Moses intercedes for Israel. What arguments did he make about why God should not destroy Israel?
5. In verse 14, how did God respond? Why do you think God changed His mind? Are there other times when God seems to have relented or changed His mind and shown mercy in a situation of anger? Do you recall situations when intercessions by people appeared to make a difference in the outcome of a situation?

Day 3: read Exodus 32: 15-20

1. In verses 15-16, what did Moses carry with him when he went down the mountain? Whose work were these tablets (see also Exodus 31:18)? What happened to the tablets?
2. In verses 17-18, how do Moses and Joshua each describe the noise they hear from the camp? Why do you think Moses said what he said in verse 18?
3. In verse 19, how did Moses respond when he saw the golden calf? How does this compare with God's response earlier in the chapter (vs. 7-9)?
4. What does Moses do with the calf? Why do you think that Moses made the Israelites drink the water with the gold dust in it?
5. When is anger an appropriate response to what others do? When is it not appropriate as a response? Think about your own experiences with anger; what have you learned from your own experiences? How can we be more like God in how we respond to situations and people?

Day 4: read Exodus 32: 21-29

1. In verses 21-24, what does Moses ask Aaron? What does Aaron say about the people? What does he say about how the calf came to be? How convincing is Aaron's response? When have you tried to make excuses for your own behavior? What results did that have?
2. In verse 26, what challenge did Moses give the Israelites? Who came to him? Why do you think that only the Levites responded positively?
3. In verse 27, what did Moses command the Levites to do, indicating that this message came directly from the Lord, the God of Israel? Why do you think the punishment was so severe? Does this seem fair? Why or why not? Have you ever felt that God was asking you to do something dramatic, that you would not ordinarily do? How did you respond?
4. In verse 28, the Levites obeyed Moses. How many people were killed? (Remember that there were close to 2 million people in the Exodus journey.) What did Moses tell the Levites in verse 29?

Day 5: read Exodus 32: 30-35 and Exodus 34: 4-7

1. What did Moses tell the people in verse 30? In verses 31-23, how did Moses try to mediate between God and the Israelites? Can you think of other people in the Bible who interceded (mediated) on behalf of others?
2. What did Moses offer to God so that God would forgive the Israelites? How is this a picture of Jesus' mediation for our forgiveness? In what ways are we like or unlike Moses?
3. In verses 33-34, how did God respond to Moses? What characteristics of God are demonstrated in this encounter with Moses? What does God say about individual responsibility for sin? Who is the one who punishes? When does He punish? What is the punishment (verse 35)?
4. In Exodus 34: 4, what does Moses do according to God's command? What characteristics of God are described in Exodus 34: 5-7?

Digging deeper: The sins of the fathers – what does it mean to punish the children for the sins of the fathers to the third and fourth generation? (see Exodus 20:5; 34:6-7; Numbers 16:1-34; Joshua 7)

Day 6:

(If you have the book Leaving Egypt, read chapters 7 and 8. If you do not have the book, consider how you might respond to these questions based on your own experiences and understanding.)

1. DeGroat writes on page 100: “When the Israelites left Egypt, they left behind much of what gave them security. But they had Moses.... Moses was God-in-the-flesh, the earthly embodiment of God’s presence... And so when Moses disappeared for forty days, so did Israel’s sense of security.” In their anxiety, they took matters into their own hands and created their own versions of God. The Israelites had a hard time coping with Moses’ absence and what seemed to be God’s absence. We too must wait at times in the midst of our difficulties. How do we try to cope when God seems absent from our lives? What do we turn to for a sense of power, control, or comfort in our waiting?
2. DeGroat writes this about idols: “Our idols are touchstones of the transcendent. They give us a sense of control, of access, of intimacy and connection. It would be easy to point the finger at Israel if we didn’t have a hundred different ways of manufacturing a sense of security in our own lives” (p. 101). On idolatry, he writes: “Idolatry is, in fact, a form of self-rejection. It is human self-sabotage, a rejection of our dignity and a rejection of the One who bestows it. It is bigger than our destructive habits and patterns because at its core it annihilates *us*, destroying our capacity to love, to trust, to hope” (p. 105). What idols have we created? What idols are we tempted to create? How have these idols revealed our own insecurities?
3. In chapter 8, DeGroat explores various aspects of obedience to God. What are some examples of an exodus-like journey of a group of people who have left a political or religious authority that defied laws and were considered “disobedient,” but were actually following God’s laws of obedience? Have you ever had to disobey a law or go against a personal or professional obligation in order to obey God?
4. On pages 118-119 DeGroat writes, “The whole intent of God’s law is to restore people into a loving relationship with God and with one another.” Sometimes we misuse the law by relying on the rules, resulting in an externalized ritual, like the Israelites and the Pharisees. It becomes a form of self-justification and self-salvation that does not really heal the heart. Thus we have an outward appearance of spirituality, yet with an inner vacancy and emotional conflict. Reflect on your own life. How has this been true? Can you honestly admit your failure and self-deception in this regard? Are you ready to open yourself to God’s grace and to obey God’s law in love?