

Come Follow me
An Elo Viz Production
Week 18
April 25-May 1st
Exodus 24, 31-34

I can imagine that by now you might be feeling a little frustrated with the Children of Israel as I am. You just hope that they would get it, right? You cry out in your mind “Come on People, just have some faith!” It seems at every sign of trouble they get skittish and revert back to old habits. This week is no different. Moses is gone for 40 days and they start to think that he might not be coming back. Exodus 32:1 says:

“And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for *as for* this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

So Aaron does as they ask of him and he makes a golden calf for them to worship. Well, at the same time God and Moses are conversing on the mountain God says to Moses. “You need to go back to your people because I am getting angry with them.” And Moses asks “Why are you getting angry with them” and God says:

“[they] have corrupted *themselves*: They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These *be* thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. I have seen this people, and, behold, it *is* a stiffnecked people”

Can you Imagine Moses at this time Storming down the mountain. Heavy steps, getting more angry with every minute that passed? He gets so mad that he grounds up the golden calf into gold dust and makes them all drink it.

Aarons, who seemed to be pretty eager to make the calf for them has a comical response when Moses starts to grill him on what happened, that is in verses 22-24 if you'd like to look at that later.

As I read this I found myself asking why did they go back to Idols. After they had seen all the miracles and deliverances why would they turn to worshiping a golden calf, and what can we learn from this experience they had?

This tactic that the adversary uses with idol worship is not a new one, and he still uses it today. I would venture to say that he has gotten so good at it that we don't even notice all our idols that he has placed in our lives to distract us from the one true God.

So, I'd like to give you some thoughts to help you identify some of these idols that we may not have noticed before:

As you go throughout our day we can notice how our thought patterns shift from what we are doing. For example when I'm at work I have moments of busy bursts, and then things will slow down and give me a chance to regroup. What I noticed in my life is that sometimes when things get so busy some days I rely on God more than other days. Then as things get slow and I am trying to regroup, some days I seek God's guidance and other days I don't. On those days that I don't rely on Him and I don't seek His guidance I have found that I naturally turn to other sources for that support. Those things have become "idols" in my life.

As another example: I feel closest to God is when I am in nature, on a hike or at the coast. For me these are places that really bring a sense of peace in my life. Now, I have never been one that has excelled at meditation, my mind moves too quickly for me to be able to focus on one thing for a long period of time. So even when I am in these majestic places I get bored and the adversary has made it so easy for us to pull ourselves away from these special moments with a tiny computer in all of our hands. I have made the decision to not have any kind of social media on my phone to help me not look at it as much and still I find it hard to not pick it up and look at it when my mind starts to wonder or when I'm unsure what my next thoughts should be. These things can be "Idols" in our lives.

A decent definition might be "Anything that takes our thoughts away from God temporary or in the long term can be an Idol in our life"

My Daughter came to me the other day and asked me "Why does God want us to worship him? Doesn't that sound strange or feel weird to you?" I thought about that for a while. At times we can have those feelings. Why would a God want us to worship him and nothing else in the world, seen or unseen? I tried to explain to her the best I could that God is our father and in the same way that she loves me because I love her, is similar to the way that God loves us and because He first loved us we should also love him. I could tell it was hard for her to grasp in her teenage mind. Then I came across this section in the book of Mormon that gives a perfect explanation as to why we should worship God and only God. It is in Mosiah chapter 2 verses 19-25. King Benjamin calls all his people together at the temple to give his finale testimony before he dies and this is what he says:

"also, if I, whom ye call your king, who has spent his days in your service, and yet has been in the service of God, do merit any thanks from you, O how you ought to thank your heavenly King! I say unto you, that if you should render all the thanks and praise which your whole soul has power to possess, to that God who has created you, and has kept and preserved you, and has caused that ye should rejoice, and has granted that ye should live in peace one with another—I say unto you that if ye should serve him who has created you from the beginning, and is preserving you from day to day, by lending you breath, that ye may live and move and do according to your own will, and even supporting you from one moment to another—I say, if ye should serve him with all your whole souls yet ye would be unprofitable servants. And behold, all that he requires of you is to keep his commandments; and he has promised you that if ye would keep his commandments ye should prosper in the land; and he never doth vary from that which he hath said; therefore, if ye do keep his commandments he doth bless you and prosper you. And now, in the first place, he hath created you, and granted unto you your lives, for which ye are indebted unto him. And secondly, he doth require that ye should do as he hath commanded you; for which if ye do, he doth

immediately bless you; and therefore he hath paid you. And ye are still indebted unto him, and are, and will be, forever and ever; therefore, of what have ye to boast? And now I ask, can ye say aught of yourselves? I answer you, Nay. Ye cannot say that ye are even as much as the dust of the earth; yet ye were created of the dust of the earth; but behold, it belongeth to him who created you.”

As I read that I said to myself “Yes!” “That is how I feel” This is why we worship God. Our worship to him is because we love him, and because we are so grateful for Him and all that he has blessed us with. I can say with surety that any other Idol in my life has never come close to providing any sort of blessing or peace or love in my life. In fact every other idol in my life and done nothing except cause be hurt or discretion or amusement. Elder Holland defined the word amusements in one of his conference talks as “A diversion of the mind intended to deceive”. So i would ask as we look at the story of the Children of Israel this week might we make a note of all of our idols and consider what it is that they are providing us, and then to consider all the we are and all that we have because of our true and living God, our Eternal Father.

If I may, might I leave you with one final thought. Moses is really starting to get it, he is really starting to understand. After this golden calf incident he offers himself as a sacrifice for his people. He has had some amazing experiences with God. From the burning bush to the receiving of the 10 commandments, spending 40 days and 40 nights with God, Talking with him face to face at the temple. These are things that I’m sure we have all wished for, Even for a small portion of those. But none of this seems to be enough for Moses. Look at Chapter 33 verse 18, Moses has the audacity to say to God: “I beseech thee, Shew me thy glory”

He wants more. He is saying, I want it all, I want to see and know all of you God! This is what happens when we have an encounter with God. It leaves us wanting to experience it again, to see and understand more of God and who He is. This is exactly what Moses is feeling.

God’s response to Moses is classic. It is how he responds to us most of the time. Instead of giving Moses what he asks for, what he wants. He gives him what he needs. Look carefully at Chapter 34. Moses asks to see all of God’s Glory and God says to him: “Not yet, Moses, instead I am going to give you something that will help you more and give you more faith, I am going to give you ‘the Word’, and I’m going to tell you about me”

Isn’t this true in our life as well? We go to God and ask for some answer, some intervention. And God in turn says “here is a scripture passage, or an experience, or a person that can help ” In most cases God doesn’t give us what we want, He gives us what we need. As a true and loving Father always does, He knows what is best for us. He knows the perfect ways to teach us. His ways always produce more faith, more love, and more understanding.

Might we express our true gratitude, worship and love for our truly wonderful and loving Father who is present in our lives every single day. I pray that our eyes may be open to see his works, In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.