

Living the Dream
Investing in the Dream in 2023
February 19, 2023

Overarching Theme: 2023 – Living the Dream

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.

Core Point: 2023 can be a year of living the dream of faithful discipleship as we take a step forward in following Jesus Christ.

Reflect on this Scripture: Exodus 24:12-18; 32:1-4.

The LORD said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain, and wait there; and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction. "So Moses set out with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God. To the elders he had said, "Wait here for us, until we come to you again; for Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a dispute may go to them." Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. The glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the cloud. Now the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel. Moses entered the cloud, and went up on the mountain. Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights.

When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered around Aaron and said to him, "Come, make gods for us, who shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." ² Aaron said to them, "Take off the gold rings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters and bring them to me." ³ So all the people took off the gold rings from their ears and brought them to Aaron. ⁴ He took the gold from them, formed it in a mold,^[a] and cast an image of a calf, and they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!"

Commentary:

As Moses approaches Sinai's summit in Exodus 24, a "cloud" engulfs him. This is none other than "the glory of the Lord" (16). There Moses promptly ends up sitting forty more days and nights there as God explains just what it will mean for Israel to live in holy ways when they finally arrive in the land of promise (God's dream).

Ironically at almost the exact same time as God gives Moses the tables of the law, the Israelites completely lose all patience with both God and their leader. The anxious Israelites demand that Aaron (whom Moses left in charge) provide some *visible* leadership by making 'gods' that will lead them. So in order to fashion a golden calf, Aaron asks for their gold jewelry, the same gold jewelry that the Lord had provided through sympathetic Egyptians as the Israelites were leaving Egypt. Aaron's abdication of leadership will later be rationalized by his claim that he just threw gold into the fire and a calf miraculously popped out. In reality, when he lifts up the golden calf he shaped from their jewelry, the Children of Israel, who had previously promised to do everything that the Lord said (Exodus 19:8) started exclaiming, "*These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you out of Egypt.*"

When Moses comes down from the mountain he discovers to his dismay the children of Israel were in complete disarray as they dance around the golden calf. However, the God of second (and third) chances gives them an opportunity for repentance. Moses invites them to reinvest the gold and silver formerly used to fashion a golden calf into God's dream of a tabernacle that will center the children of Israel in the presence of God as a growing, worshiping, serving and giving community.

Adapted from Prof. Doug Bratt
cepreaching.org/commentary/2017-02-20/exodus-2412-18/
cepreaching.org/commentary/2017-10-09/exodus-321-14/

Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:

1. After Moses was 'delayed' by his time with the Lord on Mt. Sinai, the children of Israel quickly revert from devotion to the Lord to seeking other 'gods'. What do you think was behind this spiritual digression? Fear? Insecurity? Something else?
2. The people sought refuge in a tangible 'god' (golden calf). While we are not tempted by literal golden calves today, humans do tend to seek security in tangible things. What is the danger of this tendency? Can you

think of a time when you sought security or comfort in a physical possession? Did the sense of security/comfort last?

3. To fashion their golden calf idol, the people misuse resources that the Lord had provided for them when they left Egypt (Ex 11:2-3a). Can you think of current examples in which people misuse God-given resources to create idols today?
4. While the people have to face the consequences of their idolatry, we read that God forgives and gives them a second chance to reinvest their resources into the dream of building a tabernacle in order to center their lives in God (Exodus 35:5). They respond generously (36:6-7). What does this teach us about God? What does this teach us about the people? What are the implications for us as we seek to live out God's dream?

Activity for the Life of a Disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: "*Moses entered the cloud, and went up on the mountain. Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights*" (Exodus 24:18).