

Moses Part 9 - Broken Promises, Faithful God



Exodus 20:1-21; chapters 32 to 34

After everything God had done for them – the plagues, the parting of the Red Sea, manna from heaven – the people of Israel still turned away and built a golden calf to worship. God's anger burned at their rebellion, but Moses prayed for them, and God chose to forgive, renew his covenant and stay with his people. In this week's Bassline we see God's faithfulness even when his people fail him, and we think about what it means to trust him instead of clinging to things we believe we can control.

You will need:

- Sticky notes
- Pens
- Flipchart paper





Leader's notes:

For the Beat section the young people are going to watch the clip and decide whether the objects are real or cake. The clip is six minutes long, but you don't need to use all of it. The point of the activity is to establish that things aren't always what they seem.

Watch:

Take the Ultimate REAL or CAKE Quiz (Part 4) (6:13)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pGL12OuzVSk

Say:

Today we're carrying on the story of Moses. We'll discover that the Israelites weren't very good at working out the difference between 'real' or 'cake' ... I mean, fake!





Ask:

- What helped you figure out which objects were real and which were cake?
- Did you look for clues, go with your gut, or just guess?



Leader's notes:

If there are those in the group who have followed through the Moses series so far, then give them one minute to recap the story. We will try this activity every week, and it will get trickier to fit in all the facts as we move through the story of Moses.

Say:

Last week we stood at Mount Sinai and heard God's voice thunder aloud the Ten Commandments. The people witnessed God's power and glory and promised to obey everything he commanded. Think of everything the people had seen: the plagues of Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, water from a rock, and the daily manna that descended from heaven. They had seen everything that God was capable of – and yet, at the first opportunity, they reverted to what felt comfortable.

Leader's notes:

The following clip is aimed at a younger age group, but it clearly describes the main events of Exodus chapters 32 to 34. Watch the clip together to give an overview of the story and then follow the Scripture readings and discussion questions.

Watch:

A Fancy Tent and a Foolish Cow: The Story of the Tabernacle and the Golden Calf (Exodus 32 to 34) (stop at 3:14)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GedZi43fkUQ

Read:

- ¹ When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered round Aaron and said, 'Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him.'
- ² Aaron answered them, 'Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me.' ³ So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. ⁴ He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, 'These are your gods,



Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.'

- ⁵ When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced, 'Tomorrow there will be a festival to the Lord.' ⁶ So the next day the people rose early and sacrificed burnt offerings and presented fellowship offerings. Afterwards they sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.
- ⁷ Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt. ⁸ They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. They have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said, "These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt."
- ⁹ 'I have seen these people,' the Lord said to Moses, 'and they are a stiff-necked people. ¹⁰ Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation.'
- (Exodus 32:1-10)

Ask:

- What do the people of Israel do as soon as they are asked to wait on God?
- Look back at Exodus 20:1-21. What two commandments do the Israelites break?

Say:

The Israelites broke the first two commandments. They asked Aaron to make them a new god to lead them, immediately breaking the first commandment. Aaron collected their jewellery and made a golden calf, breaking the second commandment by creating an idol for them to worship.

Aaron even announced a festival to the Lord, the true God, but he tried to worship him in the wrong way by using an idol that God had forbidden. They did not need a symbol to remind them of God's power because his glory was blazing on the mountain right in front of them. Instead of trusting the God they had seen and heard, they turned to something they could see and control.

Ask:

Why do you think the Israelites wanted something physical they could worship?

Say:

God burned in anger when he saw the people worshipping the golden calf. His response reflects the deep grief he felt for the actions of his people.

Read:

⁷ Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt. ⁸ They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. They have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said, "These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt."



- ⁹ 'I have seen these people,' the Lord said to Moses, 'and they are a stiff-necked people. ¹⁰ Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy
- them. Then I will make you into a great nation.'
- (Exodus 32:7-10)

Ask:

What do you notice about the way that God describes the people of Israel?

Say:

God no longer says 'my people'. He refers to them as 'your people', speaking to Moses. God then shares how his anger may lead to their destruction.

Ask:

Read Exodus 32:11-14. How does Moses respond?

Say:

Through Moses' prayer and intercession, the people are given another chance. Moses prays for them, and God listens. But just a few verses later, when Moses comes down the mountain and sees their behaviour for himself, he is filled with anger and throws the stone tablets to the ground, breaking them.

Ask:

How do you think Moses felt in that moment, seeing with his own eyes what the people were doing after all God had done for them?

Say:

When Moses threw down the stone tablets, it was more than just anger. The broken pieces were a powerful sign that Israel had broken their covenant with God. Their promises lay in pieces, just like the tablets. After Moses dealt with those who had led the people into sin, he went back up the mountain to plead with God for forgiveness, and God responded by creating a new set of tablets to show that the covenant was renewed.

Read:

⁶ And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, 'The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, ⁷ maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.'

- (Exodus 34:6-7)

Leader's notes:

Give each young person a card or sticky note and ask them to write one word or short phrase about God's character from these verses and from their own knowledge of God. Ask the young people to read them out and keep them safe to use later in the Sound Check section.



Read:

²⁹ When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord. ³⁰ When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant, and they were afraid to come near him.

- (Exodus 34:29-30)

Ask:

- Why do you think the people were afraid of Moses' radiant face?
- What do you think the shining face symbolised to the people about God's presence?
- Why is it significant that God renewed the covenant even after the people's failure?

Say:

This moment is the turning point of the story. God's people had sinned and broken their promises, but God chose to forgive, to renew the covenant, and to stay with them. The glory shining from Moses' face showed the people that God's presence had not left them.



Ask:

Why do you think God chose to love and stay with his people even after they failed him?

Leader's notes:

Draw a simple golden calf in the centre of a large sheet of flipchart paper and write 'Things we trust more than God' underneath.

Ask:

What are some things that people might rely on instead of God when life feels out of control or we are waiting for God to answer our prayers?

Leader's notes:

As the young people discuss modern-day golden calves, write their responses on the flipchart paper. Encourage honest discussion within the group.

Say:

In many ways, we are no different from the Israelites. They were tempted to trust in things they could see, touch and control. Many of the suggestions you have made today aren't 'bad' on their own, but when they take God's place, they become like golden calves.



Leader's notes:

Ask the group to take out their sticky notes they wrote earlier in Amplify with words or phrases describing God's character.

Say:

These words remind us of who God really is. We're going to place these reminders of God's character on top of the golden calves to demonstrate that his power and presence are greater than anything else we rely on.

Leader's notes:

Invite the young people to take turns to come forward and stick the notes over the 'golden calves' suggestions. As they do, they can read out the characteristic of God written on their sticky note.

Say:

This is what God does for us. He covers our failures with his grace, just as he renewed his covenant with Israel.



Ask:

Which truth about God's character do you need to remember this week?



Leader's notes:

Keep the Sound Check activity visible for the whole group during the Selah section.

Say:

For our moment of Selah today, we're going to take time to think about the 'golden calves' in our own lives. Think about the things you tend to rely on instead of God. Now look at the truth about God's character on each sticky note. Think about God's love, his faithfulness, his compassion – these are greater than anything else.

Leader's notes:

Ask the group to spend time in prayer. They can write their prayer in a journal or simply take a moment to reflect. An optional piece of music is provided. When you feel it is right, then bring the time of selah to a close in prayer.



Watch:

'Drawn to You' by Audrey Assad - Lyric video (4:21) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y6Yo_5KRQtI



Say:

In a piece of music, the coda brings the different aspects of the melody, harmonies and bassline to a conclusion. It pulls together the different themes and often, but not always, brings resolution to a piece of music.

Ask:

As you reflect on everything you have learned today, what is your coda?

What is the one thing you will take away from the events in today's story?

Leader's notes:

Give the young people a moment to think about your question and briefly share their coda with the group before the session comes to an end.



