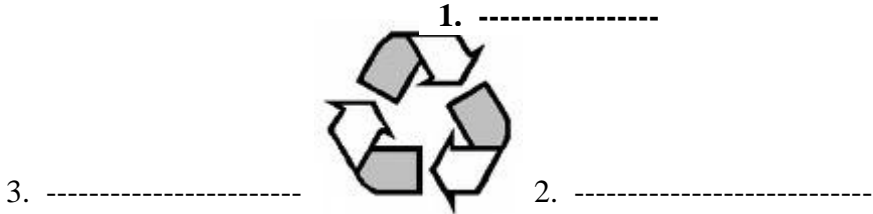


A three-stage, cyclical pattern:



1. The gravitational force of _____.

Aaron answered, "Don't be angry, master. You know that these people are always ready to do wrong. The people said to me, 'Moses led us out of Egypt, but we don't know what has happened to him. Make us gods who will lead us.' So I told the people, 'Take off your gold jewelry.' When they gave me the gold, I threw it into the fire and out came this calf!"

Exodus 32:22-25

Aaron's excuses:

- a. _____
- b. _____?
- c. _____??

2. Phase Two: _____.

Today's Equipping Point

Be an _____

Definition: *“to act or interpose in behalf of someone in difficulty or trouble, by petition; to attempt to reconcile differences between two people; to plead on another’s behalf.”*

3. Phase Three: The gift of his _____.

“My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”

Exodus 33:14

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

Matthew 11:28-30

“Your ears shall hear a word behind you saying, ‘This is the way, walk in it,’ whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left.

Isaiah 30:21

Discussion Questions

1. How “set apart” (different) are you from the world?
2. Where is sin’s gravitational force the strongest in your life?
3. How will you intercede today?

Teaching Script

Let's start today with a film clip. This is from the third of the Godfather movies, and I want you to pay close attention to what the priest is saying to Michael Corleone. The theme of chapter five of *The Story* is to be different. Listen to what the priest says about the stone in the fountain...

Video Feature:

To illustrate how society has not let Christ change them on the inside, show a clip from Godfather III:

At the beginning of Chapter 24 of the DVD, Pacino goes to the bishop and they have a chat outside by the fountain. The bishop references the smooth stones, and how the water has not permeated them for all these years. He then makes a telling comment about how society follows Christ but is not changed on the inside.

Did you hear what he said? After he noted the submerged stone was perfectly dry on the inside, he said, "For centuries, men have been surrounded by Christianity, but Christ has not penetrated. Christ does not live within them."

If there was ever an appropriate object lesson for our study today, it's this one. Consider what has just happened to God's children:

They have been miraculously delivered from physical bondage in Egypt. They have camped at the base of Mt. Sinai, and through lightning, thunder, thick clouds, trumpets and dense smoke, God has made it clear he is there as well.

He gives Moses the Ten Commandments, precepts to guide them to holiness, to take up residence with a holy God. In fact, God promises to reside with them in a newly constructed Tabernacle, so that his holiness may dwell with them.

Before long, however, as Moses receives God's instruction on the mountain, Israel becomes impatient and decides to create a tangible god, an idol made of things *they* deem of worth: gold and precious metals. God's anger burns against this rejection, because his people refuse to be unlike everyone else. Moses intercedes for the people and begs God's mercy. And while punishment still comes through death and plague, God's presence is still with the people, in the form of a cloud over the Tabernacle, or "tent of meeting," where Moses and God would speak "as one speaks to a friend."

God promises to lead his people, and, in an unprecedented event, allows Moses to catch a glimpse of God himself. God refashions two more tablets for the commandments. He makes a covenant with Moses and the people, creating the rituals of sacrifice that would set apart, or make holy, God's people before his sight. From then on, the Tabernacle was not just a place of atonement for the people's sins, but a clear signal of God's presence in Israel's journey toward the Promised Land.

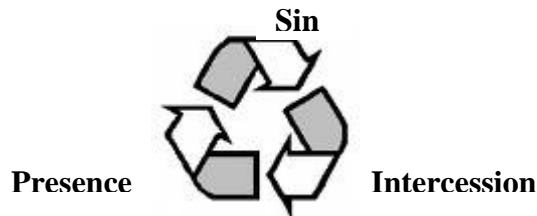
The story of chapter five is truly astonishing. God had proven faithful to preserve his people and keep his promises, despite a series of dysfunctional families, inter-generational battles, years of famine, and now foreign captivity. The message of Chapter 5 is this: You are different – act like it.

You have been rescued! Great miracles accompanied your salvation to ensure you knew this was of God. The cost to your captors was enormous, and the price paid for your freedom was *staggering*. Now, the God who delivered you calls you to a higher purpose. You have been chosen to be the vehicles of his revelation. Upon you rests an honor and a responsibility no one else holds. What a commission!

Are they up to it? Will they pick up this mantle of privilege and carry it forth?

No, they will not. In fact, not only will they deny this trust, they will set a precedent. They will inaugurate a cycle – a pattern – a three-stage template that will be repeated again and again throughout the history of God’s chosen people: first Israel, and then the Church.

Phase #1 on your diagram is *sin*:



1. The gravitational force of *sin*.

God’s deliverance of His people was astonishing. Supernatural plagues. Miraculous rescue through the Red Sea. A cloud by day. A pillar of fire by night. Water from the rock. Bread from heaven. Freedom.

No sooner has God given these blessings to his children, than their patience wore thin and they fell into disobedience, starting at the very top of the Ten Commandments and flaunting rule #1: “You shall have no other gods before me.” They choose an artificial image of their own making over God, flaunting rule #2: Do not make yourself idols of any kind.

I am surely not the only parent in the room who has uttered the words, “What did I just say?” You spend time explaining the rules, that you don’t hit girls, you don’t touch hot stoves, you don’t bathe the cat...and then five minutes later you turn around, see what they’re doing, and you’re like: “What did I just say?”

The words of God had not stopped echoing on the mountain. The dust had not yet settled from carving the tablets. Moses' knees had not stopped shaking, and there they are, dancing around an idol. Surely, God must have hit his forehead, closed his eyes, and said, "What did I just say?"

The gravitational force of sin is something that each of us must reckon with. The Apostle Paul did his own dance around a golden calf:

The trouble is not with the law but with me, because I am sold into slavery, with sin as my master. I know perfectly well that what I am doing is wrong...But I can't help myself, because it is sin inside me that makes me do these evil things.

Romans 7:14-17

Things haven't changed when it comes to the effects of sin. And if you don't think so, listen to Aaron when Moses confronted him about the golden calf. He was caught red-handed, and this was his response:

Aaron answered, "Don't be angry, master. You know that these people are always ready to do wrong. The people said to me, 'Moses led us out of Egypt, but we don't know what has happened to him. Make us gods who will lead us.' So I told the people, 'Take off your gold jewelry.' When they gave me the gold, I threw it into the fire and out came this calf!"

Exodus 32:22-25

Did you hear what Aaron said? He gave Moses the same excuses we use today when we try to diffuse mistakes, or deflect bad choices:

- a. "You know how it is..."
- b. "What have you done for me lately?"
- c. "Well how did that happen??"

Our first point today is that the nature and effects of sin never change – its gravitational force pulls us away from God and if we're not careful, our sin nature wreaks havoc in our lives and the lives of those around us.

2. The second phase to fill in on the cycle is intercession.

Last week we saw God give the whole thing away when he told the story of Moses, as a very clear forerunner of Christ. This week, we see the parallels between him and Jesus even more clearly:

- Moses was the intermediary that brought the will of God down from Sinai – after 40 days alone with God.
- After their disobedience, he fills this ambassadorial role by passionately interceding for Israel, and reminding God of his oaths, just as Jesus did in the entire 17th chapter of John's Gospel.

- Then after he destroys the golden calf, Moses goes back to the Lord and, in a third messianic act, intercedes again by offering himself to be “blotted out of the book you have written.”

While you and I must lay claim to our point #1 today, that the attractive force of sin has captured all of us, I’m here to encourage you that we must also lay claim to the second one as well: Just as Moses interceded for his people, pled their case, and offered himself, you and I must be intercessors for our families.

And there’s your **Equipping Point for this week. To lead your family spiritually, be an intercessor.**

How? Let’s listen to Webster: “*to act or interpose in behalf of someone in difficulty or trouble, by petition; to attempt to reconcile differences between two people; to plead on another’s behalf.*”

Want to lead your family well? Like Moses, be an intercessor. What snippets of your day could be devoted to interceding for your family? Even on the way home – what would five minutes of prayer on the way home do for your mindset when you walked in the door?

Do like Moses:

- spend a lot of time with God, and then share with your family what you sense from him.
- Like Moses, when your children sin, remind God of his promises of mercy and grace to all of His children, including yours.
- Like Moses, offer yourself to God and ask Him to change *you*, before you ask him to do a number on your wife.

As the spiritual leader of your family, just as Moses was the spiritual leader of Israel, *you* are to be an intercessor.

The last phase of the cycle is the best. After we sin, after Christ our intercessor has taken our punishment and our place, God leaves a magnificent gift:

3. **The gift of his presence.**

After God relents and forgives the people, a tent of meeting, or Tabernacle, is constructed where the Lord would be seen and heard. This tabernacle would lead them, show them the way, and represent God’s presence among them. This was God’s promise in establishing the tabernacle:

My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.

Exodus 33:14

This is echoed again in Matthew's account, where Jesus invites all into his presence – one of my favorite verses in the Bible:

*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.*
Matthew 11:28-30

The gift of the presence of God in the structure of the Tabernacle, has now become Immanuel, God with us.

Just as the tent of meeting ushers in the actual presence of God among his people, we begin to see a permanent, eternal template being established that points clearly 1,500 years hence: the problem of sin, an Intercessor who, with a radiant face on a mountain, descends to usher in not a set of laws but a Kingdom of grace, by taking the people's sins himself.

And as Moses the Intercessor led the people through their wanderings until they reached home, so our Intercessor, the Holy Spirit, does the same today: guide us until we finally reach home.

And so, here's the thing: the tent is still there, the tabernacle still stands, but it is transformed: it is no longer a structure made with hands, but something much more: by the Holy Spirit's residence, *we* are now the Tent of Meeting – God living in, and talking to, us. The cloud has become a voice within, so that...

*Your ears shall hear a word behind you saying, 'This is the way, walk in it,'
whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left.*
Isaiah 30:21

Such is the great grace of the Almighty: a God who doesn't just hand down edicts, but extends his own hand. Because it's not just about restrictions; it's about redemption. It's not about going **to** church, it's about **being** church. Because God Himself has pitched his tent within you.

[Intercessory prayer for our families]