

LESSON 10

MOUNT SINAI



OBJECTIVES

1. To understand that we must be patient and wait for God, without turning our eyes to the idols of the world around us.
2. To understand that we must take responsibility for our actions.
3. To draw close to God as Moses did and build up a relationship with Him.
4. To learn how to intercede for one another.

MEMORY VERSE

"You shall not make idols for yourselves; neither a carved image nor a sacred pillar shall you rear up for yourselves; nor shall you set up an engraved stone in your land, to bow down to it; for I am the LORD your God."

(Leviticus 26:1)

PRAYER

1. Lord, we thank You for gathering us here to worship You and learn Your word.
2. We ask that You give us the strength to keep our eyes on You so that we don't stray to the idols around us.
3. Please help us to learn how to intercede for one another, just as Your Son did for us.
4. Please also help us to draw closer to You and build up our relationship with You by focusing on our lesson today and applying its teachings to our daily lives.



Overview

1. Mount Sinai and the Ten Commandments

- The Golden Calf
- The Israelites Are Punished
- Moses' Intercession
- Moses' Relationship with God

2. Linking to the Ten Basic Beliefs—One True God

3. Life Application

- My Golden Calf
- Praying for Others

4. Activity—Near or Far?



Background Knowledge for Teachers

God's Commandments

The many stories of the Israelites' constant gravitation to sin may seem ludicrous to us. The Israelites witnessed God's power on a daily basis through a pillar of cloud and fire, yet they still insisted on sinning! However, their story is not so far from home for us today. Where the Israelites molded and worshiped a calf of gold, we might have surrounded ourselves with material objects that we treat with equal reverence. Another great difficulty that many Christians encounter today is where to "draw the line" when it comes to obeying God's commandments. It always seems easier to consider them as optional guidelines, rather than the concrete rules that are defined as commandments. If there is anything that we can learn from the Israelites' constant mistakes under the pressure of being God's children, it is that we must remember that, in order to come into our inheritance in heaven, we must strive every day to follow His commandments to the letter. We cannot simply gravitate across a faded "line" that we have established in our minds.

The Golden Calf

The calf was a deadly symbol: both the bull and the cow were worshiped in Egypt—the same nation the Israelites had wanted so desperately to escape—and Baal was often rendered in Canaan as a bull. The Israelites had chosen to blend their religious worship with familiar icons to which they had been specifically instructed not to bow down. In doing so, they not only broke one, but three commandments: they turned to other gods, bowed down to idols, and used His name in profane and corrupted worship.

Moses

Moses is considered to be one of the greatest figures in the Bible. His instruction in Pharaoh's palace combined with his learning in the pastures tending sheep molded him into an educated, patient, and faithful prophet who was able to lead the rebellious Israelites out of Egypt, through the wilderness, and eventually to the border of the promised land. But of all these, his most noteworthy characteristic was his relationship with God. His first desire was to see God (Ex 33:18), and God responded to Moses' great faith by showing him His glory and by speaking to him not through visions or dreams, but face to face (Ex 34:34). His closeness with God is reflected in his dealings with the Israelites; he spent decades guiding, admonishing, teaching, and punishing the Israelites in turn, all for the sake of God's promise to his forefathers. All of this made Moses one whom God knew by name (Ex 33:17) and a servant of the Lord whom He buried with His own hand (Dt 34:5-6).



Reaching Out to Your Students

At this age, your students probably want the latest toys, gadgetry, or clothing, all for the sake of fitting in at school, or simply because they think it is cool to have those things. This is absolutely normal, and depending on their families, they may or may not be getting what they want. Throughout this lesson, try to remind your students that although God has blessed us with many material things, it is always important to remember that we cannot let these things get in the way of our relationship with God. Our material belongings can grow in our minds and distract us from Him, serving as a way for Satan to tempt us and draw us away from church; they can be the beginnings of idolatry. Remind them that we can't bring our toys, gadgets, or clothing with us to heaven and that the world will eventually pass away. It is most important for us to fix our eyes on God, not on the things around us. By fixing our eyes on God, we can avoid idolatry, draw closer to Him, and have a deeper, more meaningful relationship with Him.



Opener

5 Minutes

[Write the following verbs on the board: read, listen, speak, and think.]

Before we begin today's story, let's all take a look at these words on the board. They're all verbs, or action words, meaning that there are many different things we can do with each of these.

What kinds of things do we choose to do at home? For example, do we read magazines? Do we read novels? Or do we read a lot of different articles online? [Allow the students to pick a verb and share what they do. Some examples may be: read magazines, listen to music, speak about favorite games, or think about TV shows.]

God has blessed us with the ability to perform all of these actions. We can read, listen to, say, and think about anything we want. But consider this: these abilities weren't given to us just for enjoyment. They were given to us so that we can use them to draw closer to God. What kind of choices can we make that will help us draw closer? [Allow the students to pick a verb and share what they can do. Some examples may be: read church publications, listen to sermons or hymns, speak about RE class to parents, or think about touching Bible verses.]

God always desires for us to draw closer to Him. But we can't do that unless we choose actions that will help us to do so. The Israelites struggled a great deal with these choices: listen to God's commands or listen to the idol-worshippers around them? Speak words of blessing or words of complaint? Today, we'll learn about one of those struggles.



Vocabulary

intercede: to plea or bargain on behalf of someone else



Bible Discovery & Spiritual Teaching

30-35 Minutes

FOR TEACHERS

Hand out the Bible Discovery worksheet to the students. They will be filling it out as the lesson progresses. Please refer to the Teacher Version for guidance.

Mount Sinai and the Ten Commandments

Now, the Israelites had been traveling for two months, and, on the third month, they arrived at a mountain called Sinai. Do any of you know why this mountain is important? This is where the Israelites received the Ten Commandments! Let's go over them briefly.

[Note: The Ten Commandments will be covered in greater detail in Year 1 Book 4; it is enough for now that the students simply learn and memorize them if they haven't already. However, they are not the main objectives of this lesson.]

1. You shall have no other gods before Me.
2. You shall not make for yourself an idol nor bow down to it.
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
5. Honor your father and your mother.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet.

The Golden Calf

There is another reason Mount Sinai is an important place. Do any of you know what else happened here? It was an event that revolved around something we call the "golden calf." It was here that the Israelites broke two of the Ten Commandments so recently given to them by creating and worshipping an idol! What happened to trigger this event? Let's read Exodus 24:16-18 to find out.

Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights! Can you imagine waiting for more than a month for someone to come down from a mountain covered in cloud and fire? The Israelites clearly believed that Moses wasn't coming back down again, so they decided to take matters into their own hands. Let's read Exodus 32:1-5.

Why do you think the Israelites decided to make an idol? [Allow students to discuss.]

The Israelites didn't want to wait any longer for God. They got impatient. Have you ever had to wait for someone at home or at school? Perhaps you were waiting for your mom or dad to pick you up, or for your friend to meet you after school. Did you ever get impatient while waiting, wondering where they were or what they were doing? It was likely the Israelites felt the same way. But even though you were impatient, you still waited for them, right? But the Israelites didn't try to wait for God. Instead, they turned away from Him and made their own god to worship!

The Israelites didn't only lack patience; they also lacked faith. When you were waiting for your mom, dad, or friend, you believed that they would eventually arrive, right? The Israelites didn't believe such a thing; they thought that Moses had gone for good and that God wasn't going to come back to tell them what to do. The Israelites lacked the faith to understand that they needed to wait for God.

Why do you think the Israelites lacked faith? To see why, let's read the rest of the story and compare the faith of the Israelites to the faith of Moses.

For the next part of the story, let's turn back to the Bible and read Exodus 32:7-10.

God was ready to destroy the entire Israelite nation for their terrible actions. His own people had lost faith that He would take care of them and had disobeyed the very commandments that He had given them at Mount Sinai. Which commandments did they break? (The first commandment: they had other gods before the Lord; the second: they worshiped idols; and the third: they took His name in vain.) God was rightfully angry with them for abandoning His teachings so quickly, and He was ready to punish them for it.

FOR TEACHERS

Go over Part 1 of the Bible Discovery worksheet with the students.

The Israelites Are Punished

Let's read how Moses reacted when he went down to see for himself what the Israelites had done. Please turn to Exodus 32:19-21. In verse 19, it says that Moses broke the two tablets that contained the Ten Commandments. Why do you think he broke them? (The breaking of the tablets symbolized the Israelites' action of breaking the law; they broke their covenant with God by disobeying His commandments.)

Let's read verses 16-29. Around three thousand of the Israelite men died that day because of their terrible sin against God. Only in this way would the camp survive God's judgment. Their sin wouldn't simply go away after this, though; let's skip to Exodus 33:3-4. God even refused to go with them to Canaan!

FOR TEACHERS

Go over Part 2 of the Bible Discovery worksheet with the students.

Moses' Intercession

When God first told Moses of the Israelites' sin, He told Moses that He was going to destroy the Israelites completely! Later, the Lord was ready to wipe out the entire camp because of their sin, and following that, God continued to plague the people and refused to be with them because of their disobedience. But something happened each time that made Him change His mind. What happened to prevent God from destroying all of the Israelites and forsaking them entirely? Let's read the following passages: Exodus 32:11-14, 30-32; 33:12-14.

Do you know what it means to **intercede** for someone?

When you intercede for someone, you plead on that person's behalf.

In the first passage, God wanted to destroy the Israelites, but Moses interceded on their behalf and begged God not to destroy them by reminding Him of His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Israel.

In the second passage, the sin of the Israelites had to be removed somehow, so Moses begged God to forgive them, even praying that his own name be blotted out of the book!

In the third passage, we see that Moses once again begged God to remain with the people for his own sake. As a result, God agreed to remain with them.

Moses prayed for the Israelites three times, even though he was also very angry at them for their deeds. He offered himself as a sacrifice in order to save the Israelites. As a result, the life of a nation was preserved despite their disobedience.

FOR TEACHERS

Go over Part 3 of the Bible Discovery worksheet with the students.

Moses' Relationship with God

Before, we asked ourselves why the Israelites lacked the faith to wait for God. Unlike the Israelites, Moses was able to wait on God, and his prayers were so humble and

effective that he was able to turn away God's anger. What did Moses have that allowed his faith to be so much stronger than the Israelites'? Let's read some verses to see the differences.

The Israelites	Moses
Exodus 32:8	Exodus 33:17
The Israelites held no special regard for God, proven by how quickly they turned to a man-made deity and the speed with which they degenerated into the worship of idols. They had no real, lasting relationship with God.	God declared that He knew Moses "by name." But what exactly does this mean? This was meant to portray the Lord's special attention and care for Moses. This meant that He and Moses had a special relationship with each other.
Exodus 33:10-11	Exodus 33:18
Because of what they did, the Israelites were forced to distance themselves from God both physically and spiritually. They could not approach the Lord in the same manner as Moses. Their sins kept them separate from God.	Being in God's grace meant that Moses could have asked anything of Him. But what was the first thing that Moses asked? He said, "Please, show me Your glory." This meant that Moses had a desire to draw closer to God.

Moses was able to have faith in God because he constantly sought to draw closer to God. As a result of his efforts, Moses had a very close relationship with the Lord. To Moses, God wasn't simply a powerful being to fear, but also a close friend and ally whom he wanted to know better. And to God, Moses was a very special servant. In

fact, their relationship was so close that Moses was physically transformed—the Bible says that his face shone with God's glory (Ex 34:29). And later, when he died, God buried him with His own hand (Dt 34:5-6). What an amazing relationship!

Discussion Questions

1. Do you feel that you have a special relationship with God?
2. Do you believe that you try hard enough to draw closer to Him?
3. What do you think distracts you from drawing closer to Him?
4. What are some ways we can improve our relationship with God?

**Linking to the Ten Basic Beliefs***2-5 Minutes***One True God**

Our God is the one and only God. There is no other God we should worship because His mercy and grace have given us a chance to avoid death. We must remember that if we sin and disobey His commandments, we must repent and ask for forgiveness. God will listen to our prayers. If we feel that we are far away from God, it is we who have distanced ourselves. God will never forsake or forget us, as long as we strive to stay close to Him.

**Check for Understanding***5 Minutes*

1. **What did the Israelites receive when at Mount Sinai?** The Ten Commandments.
2. **How long was Moses up on the mountain?** Forty days and forty nights.
3. **When the Israelites became impatient waiting for Moses, what did they do?** They betrayed their covenant with God by making a golden calf and worshipping it.
4. **How were the Israelites punished?** Moses ground the calf into powder and made them drink the residue of the calf, three thousand of their men were killed, and the Lord plagued them and declared that He would not go with them to Canaan.
5. **How many times did Moses intercede for the Israelites?** Three.
6. **Why were the Israelites not able to wait for Moses in the beginning?** They lacked faith because they didn't have a close relationship with God. They didn't try to draw closer to Him and instead chose to sin.

**Life Application***10 Minutes*

[**Teacher:** Hand out Life Application Worksheet #1, and go over it with the students as a class.]

1. My Golden Calf

Objective: To learn how to identify the idols in our lives today and how to remove them.

The golden calf was created by the Israelites because they had forgotten about God. Today, we are the spiritual Israelites, which means that we must remain separate and holy. We may not be creating a golden calf or an actual idol today, but there are other things that act like a golden calf in our lives. We need to know what they are and must destroy them, just as Moses did.

Read each scenario and answer the questions. [Ask students to complete the chart. Answers have been listed below.]

Scenario 1

What are the idols? TV, video games, the tablet, and books.

How can he make time for God? Justin can pray first when he comes home, instead of watching TV. He can read the Bible and pray before he goes to bed instead of reading a book.

Scenario 2

What are the idols? Superheroes, comics, and toys.

How can he make time for God? Take down the posters and replace them with Bible verses or biblical reminders. He can make these posters himself or buy from Christian bookstores. He can put the toys away and spend less time reading comics. This way, he can focus on reading the Bible or church publications. Then, he will remember that the greatest superhero is God!

[After you have gone over the chart with the students, continue with the following.]

False Gods

The idols we worship today may be harder to recognize than a golden calf or a stone idol. They may also be harder to correct or get rid of. But our modern idols are just as detestable to God as the idols that the Israelites worshiped. If we don't do something about them, they will destroy us, just as they did the Israelites.

So how do we cast down our idols? The first step is knowing what they are. Is there anything that you think about day and night? What about activities that you are constantly doing, to the point of ignoring or disregarding your school or RE homework? Are there things that you get into arguments with your parents about? An idol can be anything—it can be a person, an activity, or an object. The easiest way to identify if something is an idol is to ask yourself if this thing **makes you choose to spend time away from God**, or if it **makes you forget about God**.

Once we are aware of an idol, it is important to take steps to reduce its influence in our lives. Spend less time with your idol and more time with God. We must constantly strive to "sanctify the Lord God" (1 Pet 3:15) in our lives, which means prioritizing God over our personal idols so that they are no longer idols, but simply harmless hobbies.

Think & Discuss

1. Do you have any idols in your life?
2. What are some ways you can work to remove these idols?

2. Praying for Others

[Teacher: Hand out Life Application Worksheet #2, and go over it with the students. Then, ask them to fill in the chart with their classmates' prayer requests.]

Every single one of us has a great intercessor. Do you know who it is? It's Jesus Christ! Moses asked that God blot his name from the book for the sake of the Israelites, and in the same way, Jesus made the ultimate prayer of intercession with His death on the cross: Jesus' life for ours. The power of Jesus' intercession was so great that now each of us has the chance to experience eternal life with God, where before we could only experience death.

These are two amazing examples of intercession. Knowing that intercession can be so powerful, do you think you can do the same and pray on behalf of others? Of course you can! When we pray for the health of our family or for the safety of our friends, then we are interceding for them.

What do you think are some prayers of intercession that you can make? Ask your classmates if they have any prayer requests, and write them down below. Use the other side of the page if there isn't enough room. Then, bring this chart home and tape it to the wall in front of where you pray. Now, you can pray for your classmates and intercede for them just as Jesus did for you!

HOMEWORK ANSWER KEY

1. The Ten Commandments
2. Answers may vary.
3. They betrayed their covenant with God by making a golden calf and worshipping it.
4. Answers may vary (e.g., TV shows, games, toys, celebrities, etc.). We can avoid them by keeping our eyes on God and developing a close and meaningful relationship with Him.
5. Three. Zeal, love, and faith.



Activity

Near or Far?

10-15 Minutes

Objective: To build a closer relationship with God.

[Cut off the bottom half of this Activity page and hand it out to the students.]

Instructions

1. Fill in the target time you wish to spend with God each day to draw closer to Him and write a list of things you will do to keep God close. Keep your daily schedule in mind and be sure that it's a goal you can actually reach.

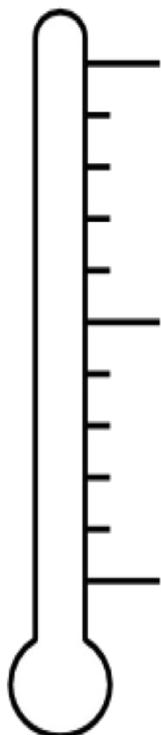
[Tell the students that before they write down a time, they should ask you first. Make sure the students put down a practical and reachable goal. For example, 2-3 hours may not be attainable. The main goal for this activity is to allow the students to establish a good routine or good habit. The suggested time is 20-30 minutes each day reading the Bible, praying, listening to or playing hymns, listening to sermon recordings, reading church publications, writing reflections in a journal, etc.]

2. Fill in the amount of time you think is not enough to get close to God daily. Then, list the things you may be doing that take time away from God.

[The time can be zero minutes/hours. The goal of this part is to allow the students to list out and see what things they may have spent time doing instead.]

3. Bring the worksheet home and hang it on a wall or put it somewhere you can see it every day.
4. At the end of each day, look at this sheet and at the time you wrote down and **ask yourself, "Was I close or far from God today?"**

Was I close or far from God today?



I am close to God if I spend _____ (minutes or hours) each day doing the following...

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

I am far from God if I spend (less than) _____ (minutes or hours) each day with him.

I spend my time on the following instead...

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

MOUNT SINAI

PART 1: WAITING FOR GOD

We're often told that Jesus' Second Coming will be soon, that it could happen at any moment. But as the days slowly pass by, it's difficult to really imagine it coming soon. And with all of the world's distractions, it's easy to lose our vigilance and turn our attention to things more immediate and closer at hand.

1. What are some things that might distract us from waiting for God?
Answers may vary. (Video games, computers/Internet, social life, movies, celebrities, etc.)
2. What are some ways to keep our focus on God and avoid a potential "golden calf" in our lives?
Answers may vary. (Dedicate time to Him every evening, post verses on the wall, limit our time spent on worldly interests, etc.)
3. Read the following verse and write it down below: Colossians 3:2-3
"Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God."

PART 2: MAKING EXCUSES

A key figure in this story who we haven't really talked about is Aaron. Let's take a closer look at him by going through the verses and filling in the table below.

The Israelites' Actions	Aaron's Reaction
They demanded that Aaron "make [them] gods that shall go before us." (Ex 32:1)	Aaron told them to... (Ex 32:2) <i>Remove the gold earrings from their ears and bring them to him.</i>
The Israelites obeyed Aaron and did as he asked. (Ex 32:3)	Aaron took what they gave and... (Ex 32:4) <i>Fashioned the gold into a molded calf.</i>
The Israelites told one another that this was their god who brought them up out of Egypt. (Ex 32:4)	Aaron saw this and... (Ex 32:5) <i>Built an altar and proclaimed a feast to the Lord.</i>

From examining this chart, we can see that although the Israelites were the ones who turned away from God, it was Aaron who came up with the idea of the golden calf and Aaron who encouraged them by even building an altar! Yet, what was his response to Moses when he came down and demanded why Aaron had done such a thing? Read the following verses and then answer the questions below: Exodus 32:21-24.

1. What was Aaron's excuse for his actions?
The Israelites insisted on evil, and the calf "came out" of the fire after he cast gold into it.
2. Who was Aaron trying to blame for the decisions that he made?
The Israelites.

Aaron tried to blame others for the decisions that were clearly his own. He refused to take responsibility for his own actions. This may seem like the easy way out, but in truth, God loves those who truly repent for their sins. This means identifying our sin, acknowledging it, and praying for forgiveness while determining to do our best not to do it again.

1. Read the following verse and write it down below: 2 Peter 3:9
"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."

PART 3: THE POWER OF INTERCESSION

When Moses interceded for the Israelites, what made his prayers so effective? Let's examine his prayers in detail.

Intercession #1 (Ex 32:11-14)

There were three main points in this prayer. Read the verses carefully and try to pick them out as a group. Hints have been given below.

1. The Lord...*delivered the Israelites with His own hand. Why undo the very work that He performed?*
2. The Egyptians...*would see that the Israelites perished and say that God brought them out to kill them.*
3. Remember...*the promise that God made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.*

Intercession #2 (Ex 32:31-32)

What did Moses offer as the Israelites' atonement?

That his name be blotted from the book, which referred to the Book of Life. He offered his own life.

Intercession #3 (Ex 33:15-17)

Moses told God that the people would not go anywhere unless...

God stayed with them.

In summary, in Moses' first prayer, all of his points focused on God's glory and honor, not on the Israelites or Moses himself. Moses was zealous for God's will.

In his second prayer, Moses was willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for the sake of God's people. He made a selfless offer that showed his love.

In his third prayer, Moses made an ultimatum; their journey of faith could not continue without God. Moses showed his strong desire to stay with God and follow Him to the end.

In other words, Moses showed **zeal, love, and faith**. These were all elements that made his prayers successful.

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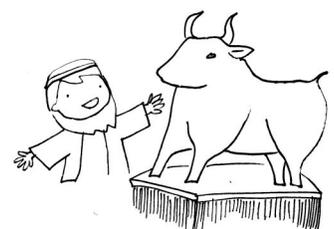
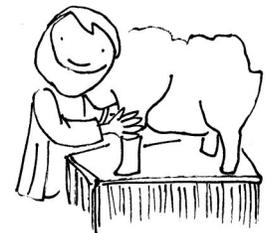
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2. The Egyptians...
3. Remember...

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Intercession #3 (Ex 33:15-17)

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Read each scenario and answer the questions.



Every day after school, the very first thing Justin does is watch cartoons on TV. Then, he plays video games. Afterwards, he starts on his homework until dinner. He plays on his tablet while eating dinner. After dinner, he plays more games with his siblings. Then, he reads his favorite book before going to bed.

What are the "idols"?	How can he make time for God?

Gary reads a lot of superhero comics and loves watching cartoons and movies about them. Gary's room has several posters of these superheroes and has lots of their action figures and toys all over his shelves. In school, he loves sharing the comics with his friends and enjoys talking to his friends about all the cool powers the superheroes have.



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False Gods

So how do we cast down our idols? The first step is knowing what they are. An idol can be anything—it can be a person, an activity, or an object. The easiest way to identify if something is an idol is to ask yourself if this thing **makes you choose to spend time away from God**, or if it **makes you forget about God**.

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Think & Discuss

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E2 Year 1 Book 3 Lesson 10—Mount Sinai

Homework Assignment

Name: _____ Parent signature: _____ Date: _____

Bible Reading: Please put a check mark in the space when you complete the reading each day.

Prayer: Please put a check mark in the space on the days you prayed to God.

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Read							
Pray							

What I Learned from the Bible This Week

1. _____

2. _____

Memory Verse

Please write down this week's memory verse. **(Leviticus 26:1)**

Short Answer

1. What did the Israelites receive when at Mount Sinai?
2. Choose four of them and write them below.
3. When the Israelites became impatient while waiting for Moses, what did they do?
4. What are some potential idols in our lives? How can we avoid letting them become idols?
5. How many times did Moses intercede for the Israelites? What three elements made the intercessory prayers successful?