

Where your heart is...

Bible Readings

OT

Ex 32:1-20

Epistle

1 Timothy 6:6-12

Gospel

Matthew 6:19-24

This session creates opportunities for people of all ages to:

- reflect on attitudes to God and to possessions
- be assured of God's forgiveness when we do not put him first
- discuss the choices we face in using our wealth and possessions
- take action to use them in ways honouring to God
- take action in situations where we see organizations and governments misusing wealth.

Main idea

This week is all about the low point for the people of God as they wandered in the desert. Moses is on Mount Sinai receiving instructions from God for the people to build a special tent of meeting, a place that will declare the presence of God with his people. The Israelites create a golden image, a golden calf as a new focus for their hopes and lives. As God's people today, we are faced with similar choices and a similar ongoing struggle. Our time, talents and treasure are all gifts from God to be used for his purpose and our blessing. But discipleship is hard! Jesus had to challenge his disciples to put their discipleship even before their families and their jobs. These things have their rightful place but that place is not on the altar of our lives, not at the centre. That is God's place.

Background

The Exodus story moves to Mount Sinai. Here Moses received God's 'how-to-live' instructions for the Israelites. Specifically Moses receives instructions from God for building the special 'tent of meeting'. The people would be invited to bring their gifts to construct this beautiful tent (Exodus 25). Instead they gathered their gold and jewellery together – the gifts that were a sign of God's blessing as they were set free from Egypt – and used it to make a calf-god. Their actions could not have been more opposite to the picture of right relationship that God was sharing with Moses on the mountain. The 'bookends' of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:2-3,17) show that

God wanted them to put him first in their lives ('Love the Lord your God') and that their attitude to material possessions was to be shaped by their relationship with him and not the desire to possess what belonged to others ('Do not covet.')

The contrast is stark and powerful. No less stark are the words of Jesus: '*You cannot love God and money.*' When God is not central something else will take his place – and the Bible calls that idolatry. Our choice is between loving God and using his gifts as he wants or loving our possessions, those we own and those we want to own! This week's activities aim to help people be honest about the struggle to let our love for God shape our attitudes to possessions.

Warming up, Warming down

The activities focus on personal attitudes and wider issues of the use of wealth.

- Got it! and Throw Six for Chocolate: two vigorous games for children illustrating the desire to possess.
- Advertising quiz
- Don't forget: a memory game reviewing the Exodus story so far.
- Scene builder: a "freeze frame" drama responding to the golden calf story.
- Advertising Africa: a powerful reflection leading into prayer.