



Scripture: **Exodus 32:1–14**

Hey friends, I'm so glad you're here tonight. Whether this is your first time or you've been part of this group for years, you belong here.

Let me start with a question: have you ever been stuck waiting? Picture this: you text someone something important, and then... nothing. No bubbles, no reply. You stare at your phone, refresh, check again. Five minutes. Ten minutes. Thirty minutes. Still nothing. At some point you think, "Forget it," and you fill the silence some other way.

Waiting is hard. And when we get tired of waiting, we often settle for something less. It's exactly what happened in the situation we're going to look at tonight. God's people, Israel, had been rescued from slavery in Egypt. They had seen miracles; plagues that broke Pharaoh, a sea split in two, food falling from the sky. But when they had to wait on God, when they thought He was too slow in providing the help they wanted, they didn't trust Him. Instead, they grabbed a substitute, something fake they could control. And it all fell apart.

So, here's the big idea tonight: don't settle for less. Because every time we do, it leaves us emptier than before. But if we trust God in the waiting, He has so much better in store for us.

So, before we dive in, let's pause. Would you pray with me? Let's ask God to speak through His Word tonight, and to show us where we might be settling for less than Him.

[Prayer]

Let's open our Bibles to **Exodus 32:1–6 (NIV)**.

*When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around 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."*

*Aaron answered them, "Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me." So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. 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."*

*When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced, "Tomorrow there will be a festival to the Lord." So the next day the people rose early and sacrificed burnt offerings and presented fellowship offerings. Afterward they sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.*

Israel had just seen God perform miracles: plagues in Egypt, parting the Red Sea, giving them food from heaven. But Moses had been on the mountain for 40 days, and they got restless. Instead of trusting God, they made something they could see and control.

Think about when your teacher doesn't show up for class. Normally, the school sends a substitute. Imagine they don't, and your class gets to pick who's in charge. You all vote for your best friend, the one who can't even keep his locker organized. Everyone knows how it will end: chaos. That is what Israel did. Instead of waiting on God, they appointed a substitute they could manage. It was a disaster. Don't settle for less.

Let's keep reading. **Exodus 32:7–14 (NIV).**

*Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt. 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.'*

*"I have seen these people," the Lord said to Moses, "and they are a stiff-necked people. 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."*

*But Moses sought the favor of the Lord his God. "Lord," he said, "why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of*

*Egypt with great power and a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth'? Turn from your fierce anger, relent and do not bring disaster on your people. Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self: 'I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever.'" Then the Lord relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.*

God saw the Israelites' stubborn hearts and His anger was real. Moses stepped in on their behalf and plead for mercy, and God listened.

Think about it like this: if your parents leave for the weekend and they decide to put your older sibling in charge. Instead, your sibling throws a huge party. In the process, the house is completely trashed. When your parents return, they are furious. So, you beg them to show grace and ask them to give you another chance. That was Moses here, standing in the gap. Even when people settle for less, God's mercy is greater.

Now **Exodus 32:19–24 (NIV)**.

*When Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain. And he took the calf the people had made and burned it in the fire, then he ground it to powder, scattered it on the water and made the Israelites drink it.*

*He said to Aaron, "What did these people do to you, that you led them into such great sin?"*

*"Do not be angry, my lord," Aaron answered. "You know how prone these people are to evil. They said to me, '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.' So I told them, 'Whoever has any gold jewelry, take it off.' Then they gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!"*

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