

MAKING GOD NUMERO UNO

by Orlan Koehn and Carol Duerksen

KEY VERSE:

Exodus 20:2 – I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

FAITH STORY:

Exodus 20:1-26

FAITH FOCUS:

Three months after their escape from Egypt, the children of Israel were gathered at the base of Mt. Sinai. The Lord had called Moses up on the mountain to receive the Lord's covenantal instructions. Moses came down from the mountain and delivered to the full assembly of Israel the Lord's words, which are known as the Ten Commandments. Our focus for this lesson will be the 1st Commandment, "You shall have no other gods before me."

SESSION GOAL:

Challenge students to consider what may hinder them from making God number one in their lives, and make a commitment to working on that.

SESSION OBJECTIVES:

Students will understand God's desire to be the Lord of our lives.

MATERIALS NEEDED AND ADVANCE PREPARATION:

Note: You will need a crown for role-playing by a student King or Queen, a royal-looking cape, bathrobe, or blanket; and something that could be interpreted as a red carpet. The carpet can be a sheet, construction paper, etc—use your imagination and have fun with these props and encourage students to do so as well.

- 1 pens or markers
- 2 a high stool or something to create a "throne"
- 3 a Bible commentary on Exodus
- 4 scissors

SESSION OUTLINE

FOCUS: (5 minutes)

Ask for a student volunteer to be the "King or Queen of the Hour" Let students know that this person will have an "hour of power" so it will be a good position to be in.

Make a ceremony out of crowning the king or queen, escorting him/her down the red carpet to the throne, and then ask students to pledge their allegiance: "Today we crown you (student's name) as our king/queen. We are your subjects and we will live and act according to your decrees."

Ask the king/queen for any comments they might have.

CONNECT: (5–7 minutes)

Say: *We have an authority figure here in our class today—our new king/queen. Who are some other authority figures in your life and your community? (parents, teachers, coaches, employer, police officer, etc.)*

How do you generally respond to the authority figures in your life?

Who is the ultimate authority in your life? Who has the final say in your life?

EXPLORE THE BIBLE: (10 minutes)

Tell the king/queen that their first royal responsibility is to tell the class how to study the passage Exodus 20:1-6. Let the king/queen decide and make assignments for this activity, letting them know about the availability of the Bible concordance. If they need help, you can suggest and or all of the following:

- 1 Reading it together.
- 2 Assigning a verse to each person to memorize and then the class recites the passage.
- 3 Assigning a person or group to see what the Bible concordance says and reporting back.

Ask the king/queen if they would like to delegate some time to you to offer some input (explain that the other option is for the king/queen to provide the input.) Since you'll probably be doing the taking, here are some points to cover:

- In the Exodus, God reminds the Israelites that he took action as an act of grace.
- Because of God's action, he now requests something of them, "You shall not have any other gods apart from Me.
- God gave all the commandments as a guide for prosperous living.
- God is a jealous god. We get a picture of a God who strongly desires a faithful priority relationship with his people.

Contrast the blessing for obedience with the punishment for disobedience of the command.

APPLY: (15–20 minutes)

- 1 Ask the king/queen if they would like to lead a discussion on the passage. Here are some questions to talk about:
 - Does God have the right to claim absolute obedience from people? Why or why not?
 - Describe the life of someone you know who has made God Number One in their life. How does that person act? Talk? How is that person different from other people?
 - What are the idols people have in their lives today?
- 2 Ask students to think of 3 things that might, sometimes, be more important to them than God is in their everyday lives. They should prepare a pantomime or body sculpture that represents each of their three things. Ask students to share their pantomimes/body sculptures with the class. Tell the king/queen that they have the option not to share their pantomime or sculpture, but that a good leader does lead by example! (Allow other

students to pass as well—you never want to force a student to do something that may embarrass them.)

RESPOND: (10 minutes)

Ask the king/queen if there's anything they'd like to do before relinquishing their crown. When they are ready to give up the crown, take it and hold it in your hand as you say to the students: *We had some fun with this crown—it represented authority during our class time together. Let's imagine now that it represents the authority of God in our lives—the idea of making God number one in our lives. I'm going to cut this crown up now and give you each a piece of the crown. I'll then give you each a piece of the crown and ask you to write something on it.*

Cut the crown into pieces so there's one piece for each student, and pass out the pieces and the markers. Ask students to write one thing on the crown piece that they are willing to do to make God number one in their life, and to sign their name with that commitment. Assure them that they will not have to show this to anyone.

When students have completed that activity, ask them to reflect quietly how their life might be different if God truly was Number One in their life. Close this time of mediation with a prayer.

INSIGHTS FROM THE SCRIPTURE:

The 19th chapter of Exodus records God initiating a covenant with the children of Israel. They had been gone from Egypt for three months and were camped at the base of Mt. Sinai in desert of Sinai. When the Lord called him from the mountain, Moses went up to meet God. Before entering into covenant, God sought consent from the people, and instructed Moses to remind the people of what God had done in bringing them out of Egypt – how God carried them on eagles' wings as an act of grace because he loved them. Now, if they will obey fully and keep God's covenant, they will be God's treasured possession. In the assembly of Israel, Moses presented what God had said and all the people replied, "We will do everything the Lord has said."

In preparation for the Israelites to receive the covenant, God required consecration and cleansing, and distance from the mountain. A thick cloud, with thunder, lightning, and a loud trumpet blast, evidenced God's Presence on the mountain. God was revealing Himself and yet He maintained distance. (Exodus 19: 10-23) This then sets the stage to receive the items of the covenant, the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20.

In our lesson today, Exodus 20:1-6 begins with, "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the land of slavery." As in chapter 19, we see God again reminding the Israelites that it was his action, an action of "love and grace" that brought them out of slavery. Because of God's action, he now asks for a faithful and obedient relationship that crowns YHWH as King in their lives individually, and as a people. The fact that God says "I am a jealous God" illustrates how intensely and passionately God loves them and cares for them. The punishment for disobedience will have a ripple effect up to the 3rd and 4th generation. By contrast, the blessing for obedience will be huge—up to a **thousand generations**. His command is clear. YHWH has to be King in their lives.