Introduction: *Present an analogy for God’s discipline.*

Begin with the following questions:

- By raise of hand, how many of you had a set standard of how to behave when you were growing up?
- What were some of the consequences you faced if you disobeyed your parents’ standards?

After a few volunteers have shared, share some of the following ideas for creative consequences for children: [http://www.imom.com/21-creative-consequences/#.XT9lb-hKiUk](http://www.imom.com/21-creative-consequences/#.XT9lb-hKiUk)

Put the following into your own words: “It’s one thing to discipline children; it’s another to discipline an entire nation. Today we’ll look at how God’s standards were set for the Israelites and how even in discipline He showed love and mercy.”

**Point 1: Show that idolatry is not the path to happiness.**

After discussing the passage for Point 1, say something like the following: “The Israelites thought they knew what would bring them joy and happiness: independence. They didn’t want to obey God or anyone else.”

Use the passage to point out some things they did to walk away from God’s authority.

Then put the following into your own words: “People are still looking for happiness and joy today. What are some ways our current culture tells us we can find it?”

Help group members understand that the ideas from the article are not bad. However, the world’s source of happiness is never the lasting source of true happiness, which is an ongoing, saving relationship with God.

**Point 2: Highlight contemporary forms of idolatry.**

After reading and discussing the passage for Point 2, say something like the following to your group: “We sometimes think of idolatry as an ancient type of offense against God. But is idolatry still an issue in our world today? Is it an issue in our churches?”

Show the following video “Prayer to the Car Gods” (59 seconds) from the movie *The Fast and the Furious*, which shows just a glimpse of what idolatry might look like in everyday life: [https://www.wingclips.com/movie-clips/the-fast-and-the-furious/prayer-to-the-car-gods](https://www.wingclips.com/movie-clips/the-fast-and-the-furious/prayer-to-the-car-gods)

Invite group members to share how they’ve been brought to recognize their own idolatry along with steps they’ve taken to repent and focus fully on God as their true Lord.

**Conclusion: Affirm that love and justice are compatible realities.**

Read or summarize the “Explain” paragraph of My Mission on page 86.

Share a time of difficulty in your own life that, looking back, you can see was God’s hand of discipline bringing you back to Himself.

Then pose the following question: “How many of you have experienced the love of God through the justice of God?” Provide time for group members to briefly share their experiences.

Teaching Tip of the Week

Be very wary of letting this become an “us versus them” session, as though people in the church would never act with such flagrant sin as the ancient Israelites did. Remind group members as often as needed that those described in the passage were God’s chosen, beloved covenant people, and thus we as God’s new covenant people should take heed of their tragic story as a warning (see 1 Cor. 10:6-13).